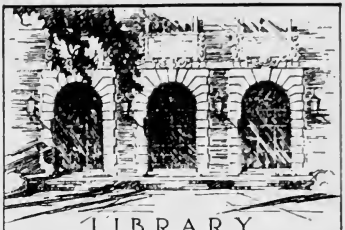

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
T75
v.1

TRUE TO THE LIFE.

VOL. I.

TRUE TO THE LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1868.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.,
CITY ROAD.

T75
v.1

PREFACE.

THE youth described in the following volumes under the name of Perth Preston was a living character. The author is indebted to a valued friend, who, when a boy, saw Perth Preston on his return from Egypt, for the account of his adventures, which are for the most part "True to the Life."

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/truetolife01lond

TRUE TO THE LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day."
MILTON.

A BROAD straggling piece of ground formed one of the outskirts of a park, within which stood a noble mansion, called "The Holmes." Stately oaks shadowed the sides of this open space, which was still spoken of as "The Chase," from its original use; but no herds of deer now sharpened their antlers against the rugged bark of the forest trees, striking terror into the hearts of villagers by their mysterious tappings in the cold moonlight hours. The oaks were gnarled, and showed symptoms of decadence; one half still indicating the influence of spring and sunshine by putting forth their green leaves, tenderly tinted with pink at the edges, whilst the bare, skeleton branches on the opposite side stood out abruptly against the sky, emblems of death in life, and crowning the hollow centre of the trunks like

ghosts of the departed bucks which had been dragged down in former days under their shadows. Dilapidated cottages, in twos and threes, stood, in defiance of order or grace, on each side of this woodland of the past, which was hardened into a road in its centre, one end leading further into the forest, therefore but little frequented, except by visitors from the great house, and the other opening into the high road.

Before this could be reached, a better class of cottage intervened—a cottage important in the dignity of outbuildings, of sheds for carts, sheds for coals and wood, a stable containing an old blind pony, and a blacksmith's forge.

This cottage, on the side next to the road, was adorned by a sign, which, raised high on two posts, creaked in the wind, and represented the family arms of the owner of "The Holmes;" consisting of an elephant's head, argent, and plain coloured gules, with two eagles regardant as supporters, which twisted their necks painfully, and seemed eager to abandon their constrained position: the motto, *Occurrent nubes.*

The other side of the cottage opened into one of those scenes of wild beauty which ought to make the despair of ornamental gardeners, so completely do they snatch a grace beyond the reach of art. Over the narrow path, shaded by old apple trees with lichen-covered stems, cabbage and moss roses nodded their perfumed heads from neighbouring bushes of sweet southernwood and lavender, whilst wild convolvuli

twined themselves round the rose-stalks, and mixed their fragile white bells with the rich beauty of those garden queens.

A tortoiseshell cat blinked her eyes in the sun, indifferent to the fact that a strange dog, a wiry-haired Scotch terrier, was accosting the bobtailed cur who attended in the smithy. Pussy was tranquil in the consciousness that she could, at a moment's notice, attain an impregnable fortress, as she believed, in the topmost branch of the old apple tree, at the foot of which she usually slept or dozed her hours away; too well fed to care to put her velvet paw on the little imprudent shrewmouse, who came out from his retreat in the box border, and cleaned his sharp nose with his fore feet, enjoying the sunshine.

Great results arise from small causes. Had pussy been less confident, the events I am about to relate would probably never have occurred; for presently the wiry-haired terrier smelt, not a rat, but a cat, and rushed through the little moss-grown gate into the garden, followed—alas for friendship and old acquaintanceship!—by the bobtailed cur who had drunk of pussy's saucer, and eaten of her food, and had been to her a brother till the evil example set him by the stranger brought out all the natural antipathy of dogs to cats, and they both rushed on Tortoise (as she was called), who escaped only from the clenching of the terrier's teeth on her fur instead

of her flesh. She raced up to the topmost branch of her retreat, and looked down with anxious eyes and piteous mewings on the dogs, who gave short barks at the root of the trunk, indicative of mischievous intentions. How she wished she had remained on the quiet bed of her small mistress that morning, and had not been tempted by the warmth of the sun to change her place to the heated gravel of the garden! She did not believe, in her heart, that the dogs could reach her resting-place; but the sound of their aggressive barkings, and the sight of their vicious-looking white teeth, terrified her. Where was little Leah, who might have driven the brutes away? She, alas! was gone to fetch eggs from a neighbouring farm, and heard neither the threatening barkings of the dogs nor the piteous mewings of her favourite. True, her young master was working at the bottom of the garden in digging up early potatoes; but pussy had little reliance on his assistance. Boys and dogs were equally her enemies; and this fact was speedily to be proved, for, coming through the Chase from the interior of the woodland, rode a party of young gentlemen and ladies, who were taking exercise in the fashion most usual at the period of my story—one thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven—on horseback. They were dressed tastefully and richly; and the bright colours of their coats,—scarlet, light blue, vivid green, or rich purple, all being embroidered with gold or trimmed with

gold lace—made a brilliant appearance, as did their small cocked hats, also bordered with gold. They were of different ages, varying from thirteen years to twenty-seven. A girl was the youngest of the party, the only daughter of Mr. Elliot, the proprietor of The Holmes. Her hair was cut straight over the eyebrows, and fell over her back in long curls. Her head was surmounted by a coquettish little hat, placed rather on one side, and ornamented by a flowing feather. Her governess, demure and starched-looking, was in close attendance, and was —being twenty-seven—the senior by ten years of all the equestrians. The boy who was digging up potatoes heard the clang of the horses' tramp, and stood up, half in light, half in shadow, looking on the youths whose lot in life was so much fairer than his own. The loud laugh, which indicated as much self-conceit as mirth, came mixed with the silvery tones of the girl across the tangles of honeysuckle and sweetbrier. Presently one of the youths looked over the thick hedge of the garden, and saw his terrier, in company with the bobtailed cur, demanding the cat, with frantic barkings, to surrender herself to the power of their teeth.

"Hey, cat! To her, Gyp! Up with you! Jump, old boy! Worry! worry! worry! Give her a shake!"

The dog, thus adjured, increased his efforts to reach the trembling animal; and his young master,

Sir Edgar South, finding the efforts of his terrier ineffectual, jumped off his horse, and, giving the reins to one of his companions to hold, began to fling stones at pussy to expedite her descent. One sharp flint descended on her paw; and she gave a dismal mew, which reached the ears of her little mistress, who had just arrived at her father's cottage by the road, laden by her basket of eggs; and, running into the garden, she saw with grief and terror the peril of her favourite, and began to shriek wildly for her brother, "Perth! Perth! Why, Perth!"

Perth heard his sister's voice, and got over the feeling of shyness which had made him wish to conceal himself, like the first gardener, and pretty much for the same reason—that he had not on a sufficiency of clothing. Yet Perth had no cause to have been ashamed of a person which needed only another lustre to bring it to the perfection of well-developed manhood. His shirt was open over the breast, and revealed a fair skin made pink by exercise. His head was well formed, and covered with light curls; and the expression of his countenance was unusually thoughtful and intelligent. He had rather not have shown himself as a mark for the derision of that fair company; but he came forward boldly to the apple tree, and cried in a voice that was heard above the din of those canine and feline battle-cries—

"Call that dog off, or I'll split his skull open with

this spade!" and the spade was raised menacingly to suit the action to the word.

"I'll split yours first," cried Sir Edgar; and he stooped and hurled a stone, not this time at the cat, but at the cat's master. Perth bobbed his head, and the stone fell harmlessly into a bush of southernwood. He raised his heavy-clouted shoe, and kicked the dog in the mouth, which was extended and directed towards the top branch of the tree where pussy crouched on her insecure throne. Perth was too cautious, being of Scotch parentage, to split the dog's skull, as he had threatened; but the kick he had administered produced fearful results, for the young aristocrats, always ready for a row when it might be indulged in with impunity, jumped off their horses, and, turning them loose into the park, picked up as many stones as the unmacadamised road could produce, and sent them in a shower at the plebeian and the cat. The intervening branches saved pussy and Perth from many blows; but pussy escaped best, for Perth, being a larger object, made a better mark for the stones which "hurtled through the darkened air." The industry Perth had exercised in his father's garden had deprived him of similar weapons of defence: no stones could be found within that cultured boundary. Little sister Leah, however, in her love for her brother and her cat, came trembling to the root of the apple tree, unconsciously carrying the basket of eggs in her hand.

"What luck!" cried Perth.

There were four dozen of them; and he flung them one after another with such right good-will, that velvets, silks, satins, and superfine cloth were all ornamented or disfigured by long streams of yellow stripes. Leah saw with increased dismay the destruction of her eggs. She went under the tree, and tried to coax pussy to come down on her shoulders; and pussy mewed, and put one paw out, and withdrew it, and then another, with similar indecision. Sir Edgar South, who was of the same age as Perth, being irritated by the fact that his nose was bruised by the egg in its perfect shape, and his velvet embroidered coat with the contents of it, as it fell broken by the contact on to his breast, now rushed into the garden, and crying to Gyp, "Seize him, dog! seize him!" ran to the apple tree, with the intention of climbing it, and throwing the cat to the dogs.

Then Perth closed with his noble adversary, having set Bobtail on his former acquaintance. Perth, seeing the rest of the young gentlemen follow to the assistance of their friend, shouted aloud to the inhabitants of the straggling cottages of Silver Ash, as the small colony was designated. Jim Sutton came running, with his cheeks unnaturally distended with the luncheon of bread he had placed in his mouth to make sure of it. George Pollice broke away from the arms of his mother, who had been

cutting his hair, and presented an extraordinary appearance, with long curls on one side and a close crop on the other. Dick Crozier was trying on a new pair of *high-lows*, and had succeeded in lacing one on, whilst the other foot was naked, when he heard the summons to battle, and rushed to it with right good-will.

The fair looks, the haughty bearing, and the gaudy clothing of the young gentlemen had often raised envy and disdain in the breasts of the boys of Silver Ash, and they rejoiced at the prospect of relieving their feelings in a manual eloquence of which their tongues were incapable.

Miss Elliot and her governess, terrified at the sound of oaths, and the sight of the blood which streamed from the noses of the combatants, and mixed with the yellow of eggs on the clothes of the gentlemen, presenting an appearance both ludicrous and frightful, passed through a small gate, and galloped across the park towards the house. Of Perth, as of Acman, it might have been said—

"Strong-sinewed was the youth, and big of bone."

A blow from his clenched fist, planted between the eyes of Sir Edgar, sent the young baronet sprawling amongst the southernwood bushes; and Perth, thinking his adversary had had enough, turned to aid one of his allies, Jim Sutton, who was fighting single-handed with two young gentle-

men, his cheeks still distended with the crust he had not had time to masticate. With his arm up he had enough to do to defend his face against the blows showered on him by his two enemies; but he had set his back against the trunk of an elm, and bravely fought against odds.

"Cowardly scoundrels!" cried Perth, striking out at the boy nearest to him, who, not expecting the attack, fell sideways on his friend, and both, losing their balance, came to the ground.

The fight now raged between the Honourable Miles Belvoir and Dick Crozier, who was getting the worst of it, though he used the foot armed by the *high-low* with great effect on the shins of his antagonist, and always declared that he should have finished him "if so be he had had time to put on both shoes;" but, as it was, Perth cried to him to stand back whilst he took his place.

"No, I thank you! I've had enough," said Miles Belvoir, who did not admire the reinforcement.

"Be off out of my father's garden then," cried Perth, who was quite aware of the importance of holding a field of battle. Miles and his discomfited companions retreated abashed from the enclosure, with the exception of Sir Edgar, who had been stunned by the blow between the eyes, and felt, as he sat up, the blood trickling from his swollen and disfigured face. He sought in his capacious pocket for his handkerchief, but not finding it, was compelled

to take the lace-trimmed ends of his cambric necktie to wipe his nose. His face was flushed with the pain of his bruises and the shame of his defeat. His dog Gyp sat up, holding one fore paw in the air, in which the bobtailed cur had made his teeth meet, and howling his griefs aloud, to which indication of distress pussy listened with awe and satisfaction from her seat in the apple tree. Bobtail had, like a prudent general, intrenched himself in the recesses of the smithy, probably fearing that the strange gentlemen might revenge the defeat of the terrier by sundry kicks on his sides, human animals not having always a notion of fair play.

Of this they had just given proofs, as five of the young gentlemen had attacked one plebeian, and then encountered four in a pitched battle, in which they had been worsted. And now Leah, who had wept silently the probable fate of her cat, unattainable as pussy was by her mistress, and over the crushed eggs which lay like so many humpty-dumpties, defying all the king's horses and all the king's men to reunite their shattered shells and put them together again, saw with pity the once handsome young gentleman seated disconsolately under the apple tree, with bare head and bloody nose; and going to an old walnut chest, she took from it a soft towel, and, armed with that and a basin of warm water, she approached Sir Edgar South, and placed it between his knees, in the hope he would avail

himself of it in bathing his face. But the stream of blood came fast, and his lace necktie was soon saturated, besides being uncomfortably rough; so he said in a lordly manner, "A pocket-handkerchief!"

Leah went back to the house, and brought out one—her best handkerchief, curiously embroidered round the border with different colours of marking-cotton, and with her name, "Leah Preston," worked with the utmost perfection of stitch. It had occupied little Leah for four months, and had been the admiration of the pupils at the village school. It required all the exercise of all her benevolence and philosophy not to weep when she saw the indifference with which her loan was treated. Mopping up the trickling blood, Sir Edgar turned and twisted it about, and unconsciously put it into his pocket when he had finished. Then he began to bathe his swollen face; and having relieved the stunned feeling at the top of his nose, he got up, and, looking at the child for a minute, felt in his waistcoat pocket for some silver, and flung half-a-crown at her feet, in repayment of her civility.

"I don't want money, sir," she said, picking it up and restoring it to the donor; "but had you not better go away? Perth will be back in a minute or two, and I am afraid father may come from Stoneham."

"Look about for my handkerchief, will you? I

will not stay now; but you may bring it up to the house—'tis somewhere in the road."

The young gentleman, after picking up two or three stones tolerably clean, had come to one taken from the side of the road which had dirtied his fingers; and he had with his handkerchief wiped off the impurity, and in the ardour of the fight had neglected to return it to his pocket. He left the garden, followed by his limping terrier, just as Perth ascended from the edge of a pond, by some broken steps of old greystone, between which the ground-ivy and long grasses had spread their verdure. He had gone down to wash his face and hands from the disfiguring blood stains, and returned with a very shining face, the result both of blows and friction. Leah, not certain that Perth would approve of her kindness to his enemy, hurried off with the basin and soft towel; for though she could have uttered many texts of Scripture to prove that she was right, she had a conviction that Perth did not lay the same stress on the written word which his father insisted on, in theory at least, if he did not in his own practice.

Leah soon, however, heard Perth calling her, and she descended the stairs in haste, in obedience to his summons.

His face was troubled. "Leah! what is to be done about these eggs?"

Leah went to the basket. They were all gone,

She looked up in blank dismay. She had seen some used by Perth as missiles, but had not believed that he had committed the unheard-of extravagance of throwing them all away.

"What will the father say?" she gasped out.

"I don't know, and I don't much care," replied Perth. "Perhaps he will not find it out," he added, with a faint hope that belied his previous boast.

"Oh dear!" said Leah, "they use such a quantity for omelets, now that they have company at the great house. I promised the cook that I would take some up to-day; and if I do not carry them, the boy is sure to be sent to fetch them."

"The father set me to dig up that piece of potatoes before he went to Stoneham, or I would go to Farmer Evans and get some more."

Leah desponded.

"I took every one the hens had laid this morning; besides, how can we pay for them?"

Perth was silent. He felt himself aggrieved; for he was conscious that he was a strong boy, and earned at least half the wages of a full-grown man, whilst his father never gave him a sixpence for pocket-money. He had none, therefore; and Leah had but four shillings and sixpence, which had been found amongst the clothes of her dead mother, and which had therefore a sacred value in her eyes, which made her unwilling to part with them.

"We must tell the father when he comes back," said the boy gloomily.

"Why must we?" rejoined Leah, looking frightened.

"Because he will see the flowers trodden down, and the egg-shells all about. Nothing but a soaking shower of rain would put it right; and there is no chance of that," he continued, looking up.

Leah ran about the garden, trying to prop up the broken shrubs, and picking up the bits of the egg-shells, whilst Perth, moaning over the time he had lost, returned to his potato-digging. Thus employed, they awaited with anxious hearts the return of their father.

CHAPTER II.

"In thoughts from the visions of the night, when 'deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up."—*Job* iv. 13—15.

Caleb Preston had been employed, for some years before he came into Essex, on the estate of a nobleman in the north of England as gardener. He was a Scotchman, and had been liberally educated; and being a clever and enthusiastic person, he had congratulated himself on his unusual success in classical attainments, which were a source of internal pride and satisfaction, and which conduced to his regarding with contempt others less fortunately gifted by intellect or cultivation. He was outwardly of a cold contained deportment, and it was whispered that his opinions on religious subjects were of a character rather erratic. His wife had been a very beautiful woman, of a simple mind and deep religious feelings. When after the birth of her second child she showed symptoms of incipient consumption, her husband, alarmed lest he should lose a treasure which he had never felt to be one till he was threatened by its loss, gave up his situation and came further south, in the

hope that a climate less bleak might serve to restore his wife's waning health.

This result did not follow: she faded by slow degrees, and with a patient spirit bore her bodily sufferings, and prayed with trembling hope to the Heaven in which she looked for her exceeding great reward. Her husband observed with astonishment the spectacle of a timid, gentle woman looking steadfastly at the fate from which he, with all his intellectual cultivation, shrank with dismay.

"She," he said, meditating, "has worshipped on Mount Calvary, whilst I have wandered on Mount Parnassus. She has chosen the right way, which has led her over the dark mountains, where her feet stumbled not, to the shining rivers and still waters of paradise. She had been one of the elect—chosen before the foundation of the world to be one of God's peculiar people; and he, was he one of those accursed ones ordained to dishonour and wrath? Alas! what could he do to be saved?"

He asked this question of the inanimate form of his wife, as he sat through the first dreary night of his great sorrow by the bedside on which the corpse was extended.

If, indeed, it were true that the blood of Christ availed only for the salvation of those who from eternity were elected and given to Him by the Father, how did his chance stand?

He knew not. He yearned to live again in a

future state with the gentle, long-suffering woman for whose intellect, when she lived, he had felt a profound contempt.

"Lucy!" he cried, apostrophising the corpse, "has the light of eternal truth dawned on thy mind? Has that been made clear to thy simplicity for which all the philosophers, all the ecclesiastical authorities of the world, seeking to know, grope darkly and never find? O Lucy! I wander in gloom! Monstrous shadows of unknown creatures surround me! I strive, as it were, in the darkness of the pre-Adamite world. I try to catch at something solid and tangible, but all is misty and uncertain. Why do I look on thee with such awe and dread? Alas! my wife that was! Did this cold lump of earth ever rest on my breast in the warmth of love and sleep? Wilt thou not answer me, my wife, from the distant land whither thy cold feet have departed? I, who never before called thee in vain, implore thee now for an answer—for a sign. I who, in the pride of intellectual cultivation, scoffed at thy unlettered devotion, now entreat thee, bow down to thee, as wiser than the wisest of the earth. I put forth all the energy of my mind and heart in this one prayer. Let me know from the world of spirits if I may yet be saved, and how!"

He knelt by the side of the low bed, and leant his head on his clasped hands. "Human learning tells me nothing. I am stopped at the barred door of

death. I have squandered my mental force on a pursuit which has dissolved like a snowball in my hand, leaving me chilled and benumbed. I languish for knowledge, and the true wisdom is inaccessible to me!"

Sleepless nights and anxious days had diminished the force of his physical powers, and he slumbered. Memory and fancy mingled in the images presented to him in sleep. He was again in the noble gardens in which his house had stood before he left the service of Lord North. It was a twilight deepening into night—for who dreamt ever of broad daylight?—and not finding Lucy in the house, he had walked to a temple, of which the pillars were clustered with climbing exotics of rare perfume, and, in daylight, of resplendent colouring, but dimmed now by coming night. She was seated on a bench inside the porch, reading the Bible, as was her wont. He approached her with eager joy—joy more vivid from the indistinct sense that something had occurred to trouble it, and render it insecure. He knew not what.

She seemed to hear his step, for she turned; but the face was not that of the Lucy who had sat in those beautiful gardens. The great awe of death was on it now. She pointed to the open page of the Bible, from which this text stood out, illuminated in letters shining like the noonday sun, and shedding a glory over the book and the white dress of the

woman, and on the delicate hand which pointed towards it—"You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." The vision faded; but the husband accepted the dream as a heavenly inspiration of comfort. His trespasses and sins had been his love of human lore. He was quickened now to nobler aspirations. The wisdom of the world had become unto him as foolishness. The first part of Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" he threw into the fire. His only book in future should be the Bible. On the evening when, after the afternoon service, the body of his departed wife was consigned to the grave, when the clergyman had left the burying-ground, Caleb Preston stepped on one of the oblong graves of solid masonry, and addressed those of the congregation who still lingered in that summer twilight. There, looking sometimes at fresh mould thrown up by the side of the grave into which the coffin had been lowered, sometimes at the sky, in which the sunken sun had left the reflection of his glory, he spoke to them with the authority given by his high-wrought sensibilities and newly-awakened convictions.

He told of his own life—how, having been wise, like the fool, in his own conceit—having been puffed up by the conviction of his own great acquirements—he had thought to reach to the skies, like the builders of the tower of Babel, by the work of men's brains and hands, by the cunning of their crafty

inventions. He spoke of his dead wife, of her unobtrusive piety, her undoubting faith, her useful and blameless life. Then, in tones lowered to those of awe, he told of the vision which had come to him as he lingered by her side in the watch of the dead; of the illuminated words which called him from the bitterness of repentance to the hope of a happy future; for he was quickened who had been dead in trespasses and sins.

The awakening from this living death had made him eager to convey to others warning and exhortation. He began with an exposition of that doctrine which, with all its startling terrors, appeals especially to the vanity of man. That the fate of each of his hearers had been especially predestinated before the foundation of the world, and had been the subject of God's peculiar thought and decisions thousands of years before this earth existed, was an announcement both startling and agreeable to the inherent vanity of the human mind. In proof of this statement the preacher quoted the text, "According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundations of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Then came the thrilling inquiry, Are you of the elect? have you been called by a certain and unmistakable influence to the feet of Christ? Can you say that God's fear has entered into your hearts so that you shall not depart from Him? and

did this conviction come upon you in the hours of night, or at mid-day; when you were transgressing his commands, or praying for his clemency; when you were in the joy of boon companions, or in the silence of your homes? To him that is called, to him that is chosen, doubt lives not. All fear is lost in the glorious certainty which is the portion of the elect of God.

His earnest pleadings excited, first astonishment, then interest; one or two of the farmers, who had gone to get their carts from where they had been put up during the service, pulled up their horses and listened to the solemn tones, which sounded so impressively through the still evening air. On the following Sunday Caleb Preston addressed the congregation, as they left the village church, from the uprooted trunk of an elm tree. On the succeeding Sabbath it rained, and one of the farmers offered him the use of an empty barn, where many listeners flocked to hear what they termed the words of eternal life, not spoken in cold, measured accents, but poured forth with all the impassioned earnestness of a man deeply impressed by the truths he promulgated.

Thus was Caleb Preston installed as a preacher to a poor and scanty congregation, from whom he received nothing, except some small offerings of vegetables and fruit from the cottagers, or fowls and eggs from the farmers.

To eke out his income, he kept a small general shop, which was the help in need of the cook and housekeeper at the great house, when they had expended their materials and forgotten to order more, or had been disappointed in the execution of orders which ought to have been forwarded by the waggon from London.

CHAPTER III.

"Youth what man's age is like to be doth show,
We may our ends by our beginnings know."
DENHAM.

WHEN Caleb Preston returned, he found Leah twisting the corner of her pinafore in the excess of her nervous trepidation, and Perth with moisture on his forehead, not due entirely to the energy of his manual and pedal operations. The boy came up, however, boldly; and if his heart beat faster, his utterance was deliberate, and did not evince the trepidation he felt.

"If you please, father, the young gentry from the great house stoned Leah's cat, and came into the garden to set their dog on it. I threw the eggs at them which Leah brought from the farm, and they are all broken and destroyed. Also," after a pause, "I knocked one of them down."

Caleb Preston looked at Leah. Luckily the expression of her face, so flushed and timid, reminded him of his dead Lucy when the hectic colour had tinged her face. She looked up at her father nervously with a sidelong glance, as her head bent over the fur of her favourite, which was purring a

pæan of triumph in her mistress's arms. The reproof he had intended to give died on his lips, and he walked hastily into the house.

Perth looked round comforted, as one who, expecting a thunder-storm, sees it moving slowly to a different part of the hemisphere. He heaved a sigh of relief, and continued his gardening with a feeling of self-gratulation that the next day was Sunday, and he might rest from the labours of the week.

Sunday was a trying day at the Holmes, for people whose wearying occupation consisted in the search for amusement. Miss Elliot and the governess went to church in the morning at Stoneham—there being only service on alternate Sundays at the little church in the park—and the young men "yawned their joys," and would have been glad of a little animating vexation for a change. Sir Edgar South, indeed, had it in an unpleasant mark of knuckles between his eyes, and a headache also. The lady's-maid, housemaids, and valets had been exhausting all the resources of their skill to clean the polluted suits and to raise the depressed pile of the velvets.

As the afternoon wore on, the governess and the young lady grew weary of the effort to read good books, and to talk only on religious subjects, which the elder of the two ladies considered the duty of all well-educated females, and proposed a walk in the park. The boys, also, had become weary

of well-doing, and were making a tremendous noise in the billiard-room. Mr. Elliot had retired to the seclusion of his library, where he would have been at peace but for the consciousness that a drawer in his writing-table was crammed by a heap of letters which contained often-sent-in accounts. He knew the look of the coarse blue paper on which the wafered letters were written; and he knew they were headed by bill delivered seventeen hundred and ninety, ninety-one, ninety-two,—reduced by a few sums paid on account, but leaving a frightful amount in the aggregate of each demand.

Miss Bruce, the governess, and Miss Elliot put on their hoods and wandered to the most secluded portion of the park.

There was a bridge which spanned the waters, over a weir dividing the lake from the stream, which fretted and whimpered below it, after having flowed from the higher ground through the body of the water. It was a charming place for idle folks to lean over the rustic bridge and listen to the murmur of the small waves, and to observe them as they leaped from moss-stained stone to stone in their hurrying descent. The sides were fringed by foxglove and ferns, and blackberry brambles arched their prickly stems, and displayed their purple fruit where no rash hand could reach them.

On this Sunday afternoon there was stillness in the air, excepting when the waters murmured on

their way, or a peal of church bells came occasionally on the gentle breeze, and then sunk into silence, as the sounds were borne away by it in the distance.

The ladies lingered on the bridge; and having enjoyed the tranquillising effects of the sylvan influences, they began to talk, unconscious that Perth Preston, who was wandering in the park to enjoy his leisure, and who was aware that, after the events of the preceding day, he might be treated as a trespasser, so soon as he saw the white dresses of the governess and the little girl gleaming in the evening sun, plunged into the thicket by the side of the bridge, and let himself down into one of the recesses, overhung by willows and laburnums, which skirted the water-fall, where he was an unsuspected listener to the conversation between the girl and her governess.

"It is nice to be quiet here. I don't like Sir Edgar: he's a wicked, cruel man. He was setting two dogs to fight in the billiard-room. I heard the growling as I passed the door."

"Oh, my dear Miss Elliot, you should not say that! He is very rich."

"Is he?" said the girl, rather upset by the idea that he must be agreeable because he was rich. "I think he is a nasty man to throw stones at the cat in the cottage garden, and I was glad when I heard that the handsome boy had spoilt his nose."

"My dear! my dear! Young ladies should never

think any man handsome who is not well born and well bred."

"He may be well born, that nasty man, but he is not well bred; for he took the last apple out of the plate to-day, and left none for me. I like the cottage boy much better who fought for the cat."

"Miss Elliot, remember you are a lady, and should not have low tastes. Why, that boy knows nothing, of course—can't read or write; and Sir Edgar has been taught Greek and Latin, and all sorts of things that gentlemen are supposed to know. That boy will never be anything but a labourer. Sir Edgar will be returned for Parliament when he is one-and-twenty, and will be a great man."

"When he is," said the child, "I hope he won't be so greedy and cruel."

"When he is," thought the governess, "I wish he would marry me;" and they passed on.

Perth listened with sullen grief. He cared for what the governess had said in his disfavour. He cared not for the praises lavished on him by the child. He was never to be anything but a labourer. The lady had pronounced that to be his fate. Could neither read nor write, of course! Perth had been carefully taught the rudiments of Latin by his father before his mother's death. He had learnt with surprising speed and accuracy, and his father had been at the time pleased at the unusual progress the boy had made; but when Caleb Preston had thrown

aside all human learning—that being as worthless, he said, as the crackling of dry thorns under the pot—he had taken away the rudimentary books from Perth, who was too young to feel the deprivation otherwise than as a relief from lessons.

Now the contemptuous observations on his probable ignorance, coming from the lips of a pretty young woman who lived in the great house, made Perth long to go and tell her that he could read and write, and had read the Georgics and great part of the Æneid in the original: the idea passed through his mind that he would do so. Luckily, he was too bashful to carry out his intention; for Miss Bruce would probably have thought that the Georgics were poems in praise of the reigning king, and therefore written in English.

"I'll have those Latin books down before I sleep," said Perth to himself.

He remembered all his father's recent vituperations of learning as being utterly vain and foolish, and causing the feet of the feeble-minded to stray into dangerous paths; but he recollected also that when his father was brighter and happier he had been eager that his son should be well grounded in the dead languages, and had seemed to expect some future good to result therefrom, both to himself and to Perth.

"If my father was right then, he is wrong now," thought the boy; "if he is right now, he was wrong

then. Other people look down on and despise ignorant persons: I will not be ignorant. They despise labourers: I will not be a labourer. They despise poor people: I will make myself rich." Grand schemes these, but very difficult to carry out for a boy of fifteen or sixteen, whose father was unwilling to aid him, and who had not a penny in his pocket that he could call his own.

CHAPTER IV.

"L'homme est toujours l'enfant, et l'enfant toujours l'homme."
—*French Proverb.*

When Caleb Preston burnt his copy of Tom Paine, and one or two books of similar character, he experienced the difficulty which every one probably has found in destroying effectually any large quantity of compressed paper by fire, without setting fire to the chimney and poisoning the house with smoke. The idea of selling his books flitted through his mind, but he dismissed the thought; for would he not in this case be disseminating mischief, and sowing the seeds of crime in hearts yet innocent, or encouraging in yet deeper guilt those who were sinful?

He therefore threw all the remaining volumes into a large chest, and locked it, placing the key on a nail in his own bedroom.

Perth had witnessed the consignment of his old school-books to this prison; and when his father stalked out, looking more stiff, angular, and wrapped in his own thoughts than usual, with his Bible in his hand, making his way towards the barn, whither he expected Perth to follow him with little Leah, his son stepped stealthily to the great chest, and, having

unlocked it, knelt on the floor, and tossed out volume after volume in his eager search for his long-lost friends.

Like the young man who surreptitiously entered the study of Cornelius Agrippa, and plunged into the research of forbidden themes, Perth could not forbear reading a few sentences here and there, and grew so much interested that his occupation proceeded slowly. He started, at length, at a noise behind him; and turning with rather a pale face, was reassured by the sight of Leah, in a clean, light-coloured, gingham frock, with arms naked from the elbow, and little black mittens, and a white linen cap on her head, and a Calvinistic hymn-book in her hand.

"Perth! what are you doing? What will father say? Oh! please put the wicked books back, and come to hear father discourse."

"Go on yourself. I will follow you presently;" and he went on more rapidly in his search for his treasures. He had to remove nearly all the books before he found the old Latin grammar, dark with the thumb-marks of his childhood. He remembered how he had been starved by his father because he had sat all the afternoon, when he had been but seven years old, unable to master, because he could not understand, one sentence in the adjectives. Starving had been a favourite punishment with Caleb Preston. Luckily for Perth, he earned his

breakfast, after his troubled brain had rested in sleep for seven hours, by repeating *verbatim* the obnoxious sentence which had been his stumbling-block on the preceding day. He looked at the worn pages with affection, and then putting the book on one side, seized the Latin dictionary which had been placed near it in the trunk.

Not satisfied, he continued his search for a Greek grammar, of which he had never yet had possession, and carried off that and a lexicon. After he had replaced the books, locked the box, and hung the key on the nail, with careful observation to let it hang precisely as he had found it with the wards pointing to the right hand, he proceeded to hide away his treasures as he best might, and concealed them under the bolster of his small bed. He was not afraid that Leah would betray him; and his father, should he miss the volumes, which was very unlikely, would never think of seeking for them under his son's pillow. Then he put on his cap, and hurried off to the barn, which he luckily found so crowded that his father could not have discovered his absence.

Caleb Preston had been very energetic that day in his discourse on predestination, the first of the five points, choosing for his text, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also glorified." Perth listened and meditated; meditation begot doubt of the correctness of his father's judgment. That God should have pre-

destined, before the creation of the world, the majority of his creatures to an existence of eternal torture seemed to him to be making the Supreme Being a fiend.

"I have some silkworms at home," argued Perth, "in their cocoons. I may bring them to life or leave them dead. If I bring them to life for the purpose of putting them on the bars of the grate and roasting them to death, I do a wantonly cruel act; but if, by so doing, I keep them burning to all eternity, what a monster I should be!" Perth did not disbelieve the Scriptures, but only his father's interpretation of them.

Caleb Preston brought a strong array of texts to bear out his arguments; but Perth observed that they were nearly all selected from the Epistles, and not from the Gospels. Perth had rather not have thought on a subject so abstruse; but being compelled to attend, he battled with the difficulties in his own mind as he best could. With the profound respect which was extorted by parents in the last and at the beginning of the present century, Perth would never have ventured to propound his doubts to the paternal ears; but they tended to discredit his father's judgments, and induce him to rely on his own.

As he returned home by the park, through which there was a right of way, he passed the governess and the young lady, and felt his face flush at the memory of the scornful words he had overheard

applied to him by the taller of the two. To the other he paid no heed. She was but a child. Involuntarily he touched his cap in reverence as they met. Well-bred persons would have acknowledged the salutation; but the governess was not well bred, and passed the youth with her nose in the air. The child made a slight inclination of her head, from her inbred refinement of feeling, and then, scared at her temerity, looked furtively at her companion, and blushed crimson. Perth saw it not. With a boy's nascent feeling of devotion to the sex, he was inclined to adore the slim icicle who scarcely was conscious that a clown was treading the ground beside her. This creature of delicate form, draped in white muslin, with her dark hair surmounted by a black silk hood, appeared to the ignorant youth a masterpiece of nature, enhanced by the refinement of education and culture. She had despised his ignorance: he would no longer be ignorant. She had derided his poverty: he would find his way to that which was better than house and land, and might lead to the possession of both. And she had counted him as nothing compared with that insolent aristocrat whose face, he remembered with satisfaction, he had disfigured; but he would win fame, and distinction, and wealth, and prove his nature superior to that butterfly youth whom she admired so unboundedly. "I wonder if she saw him when he went back first, with his swollen eyelids and his shiny nose?" said the boy, meditating.

Perth was not of a nature to spend his time in vain reveries. His father would have taken pretty good care that he should not resemble Beattie's Edwin. He was meant for something better than a philosopher only; he was to be a man of action, prompted by a keen intellect. Perth would have preferred sitting under one of the trees in the park, and giving himself up entirely to his study of the Latin grammar, which he had partly forgotten during the years that his father had ceased to give it to him as a task: now he repeated his declensions of substantives, as he drove the spade into the ground by the force of his foot, and turning up the moist earth, shook out the potatoes, dividing the large from the small ones, to use the latter and clump the former for winter, or when their scarcity should compel the buyer to give Caleb Preston such a sum as might remunerate him, and thus aid his efforts to eke out his small income. Perth had forgotten his former lessons, because nothing had reminded him of them, like Rousseau, who twice committed to memory the science of botany in vain, because he was so short-sighted that in his country walks he did not see the flowers that grew in his path, and was never appealed to by objects of which he would gladly have been reminded. But Perth was young, and had been younger when he had wept and been starved over the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives. His mind had been like the parch-

ments once overwritten with valuable information, which had been obliterated by rude hands, and inscribed with words comparatively worthless,—now by the magic wand of memory their palimpsest re-asserted itself in all its valuable integrity. The self-imposed lessons were a great happiness to him. They gave him a secret spring of enjoyment; the greater, perhaps, because it was like the stolen waters, and partaken of in solitude.

Perth was a real character. I am aware that a youth who pays stolen visits to his Latin grammar, and fears his father's anger should he be detected, will seem to my readers a faultless monster that the world never saw. Teachers now cease to insist on the acquirement of those languages, the mastery of which made so valuable a foundation for the acquirement of other branches of learning. They lose sight of the fact that the mental effort necessary for such a triumph over difficulties strengthens the mind of the pupil as much as athletic exercises do the body. Caleb Preston considered learning as foolishness in his newly-awakened and narrowed religious tenets. Masters at present think it difficult to teach that which, as a rule, boys do not like the trouble of learning. When Perth had struggled through the Latin grammar, he pined for some Latin book, on which he might try his newly-acquired skill. Accident aided the accomplishment of his wishes. He was sent by his father to Stoneham to purchase

waste paper in which to envelop groceries. This was to be obtained at a farthing per pound, and consisted of imperfect proof sheets from printers, old copy-books from schools, and sometimes old school-books. The master of the shop, when he weighed out his goods, took up a small edition of Virgil, minus its original covers, and observed with contempt that, from the diminutiveness of the leaves, it was only fit for lighting fires, and would be useless for wrappers. The boy took it up with sparkling eyes, and was absorbed in the attempt to remember how he used to render into English the passage beginning—

> "Quid faciat lætas segetes, quo sidere terram
> Vertere,"

when the owner of the waste paper, being impatient, said, "I'll throw that old book into the bargain, as it will not be of much use to me." Perth thanked him so warmly that the man half repented his generosity, and fancied that he had unconsciously parted with a treasure. However, the mischief, if any, was done, and he let the boy retain the prize.

The studies of Perth went on vigorously. They were a secret source of unsuspected pleasure. When Latin was no longer a mystery to him, he took in hand the Greek grammar, which he handled reverently; for, besides that he considered the book as the vestibule of a noble building, the frontispiece represented a succession of medallions, containing

pictures of the different arts and sciences, and in the tiny profile of *Arithmetica* he fancied he saw a likeness to the haughty and cruel governess who was the object of his silent adoration.

Three years passed away, and Perth had required all the consolation bestowed by the likeness in *Arithmetica;* for Mr. Elliot had removed to London, and taken all his household with him. The venerable Hall was tenanted only by a woman engaged to air the rooms. Probably keeping an open house, which seems inevitable in the country, made inroads too great on the purse of the unfortunate owner. At length the death of an aunt relieved him from some of his most pressing embarrassments; he returned to his favourite residence, and determined to signalise his advent by a rustic party, which should, if possible, give a day of recreation and delight to the poor in his village—a favour for which his little daughter had pertinaciously petitioned.

Rumours of this rare entertainment preceded it for some weeks, and "Is everybody to be asked?" was the often-repeated question, as constantly answered in the affirmative. In vain Caleb Preston preached on the vanities of the world and the lusts of the flesh; in vain did he give out the hymn—

> "Why should our garments, made to hide
> Our parents' sin, provoke our pride?"

The thoughts of the female portion of the congregation wandered to possible adornments for the momen-

tous day of the coming entertainment, and the fear lest they should be as unworthy in appearance as he who had not on a wedding garment; whilst the men thought of abundant feeding on meat and pudding, and getting drunk on strong ale, which was then, as now, the supreme happiness of an Essex yokel.

It is fortunate that preachers are often in happy ignorance of the ineffectual efforts they make to insure the attention of their hearers. Caleb Preston saw a new member in his congregation, and rejoiced accordingly, all the more as the stranger was an old man, and, being head gardener at the Hall, had formerly said many disparaging things of Caleb Preston, whom he suspected of having settled in his present abode with the idea of superseding him. Many persons had suggested it to Luke as a likely circumstance, and he had only got rid of his suspicions from observing how utterly careless was his neighbour of everything unconnected with his vocation as preacher of the Gospel. He wanted Preston to do him a favour now, and he thought the best way of bringing this about was to spend the evening in listening to his neighbour's doctrine, in the hope that Preston might accord him his request.

He therefore waited till the little congregation had left the barn, and joined the preacher, as, with parched lips, a face pale with emotion, and a brow moist with the energy of his denunciations, Preston walked in the twilight back to his cottage.

"A fine discourse, neighbour. You got to the *root* of the matter, if I may use a professional phrase. Such powerful teaching is wanted to touch the hearts of men who were born in sin, and shapened in iniquity."

Preston's angular countenance relaxed not a jot from its cold severity of expression, whilst he said, in a voice singularly harsh and discordant with the sense of the words he used—

"I would not only wield the scourge; I would tempt with the description of heavenly joys. I would bring luscious fruits from the promised land to refresh the weary, even such as my namesake Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, bore on his shoulder from the land of Canaan, having followed the Lord."

Preston was jealous of the fame of his oratory, and Luke had praised his threatenings, but not his promises; and he felt as a mother who hears one of her twins commended, whilst nothing is said of the other.

Now Luke saw that he had not made a favourable impression, so he tried another tack.

"Wonderful grapes they grew in that land of Canaan, if the Bible speaks truth. Can't say I ever got any bunch so large as to take two men to carry in these hothouses; yet I do all I can. Maybe you were more lucky up in your country; for I heard say you was head gardener to some great lord."

"Yes, to Lord North. I suppose the country and

climate were favourable to the grapes and other fruits by the brook Eshcol, in Canaan; for the men brought, also, specimens of figs and pomegranates."

Here Luke's face worked with anxiety to interrupt the speaker, but Preston liked to hear himself talk, and went on ruthlessly—

"A sacred fruit borne by the punica, and ordered to be worn as ornaments, weighted with golden bells, on the border of the priest's robe; also likened by Solomon to the temples of his beloved."

"The very thing I wanted to speak to you about, neighbour. You see, I am not so young as I used to be, and rather stout."

"The flesh-pots of Egypt," muttered Preston.

"Well, though Solomon's fair one must have been a bit sallow to have her forehead like pomegranates, yet I must say a pomegranate tree——"

"Punica," suggested Preston.

"Well, a punica tree in full bloom is as pretty a sight, when it is well trained, as any in England. And this is my trouble. The wind has blown down the pomegranate branches that cover the south side of the house; and they grow so high that, to tell the truth, I don't like the job of going up to nail them to their right place. I thought, neighbour, that, as you are a spare man, you might do it for me; and I would give you anything reasonable for your trouble, besides standing treat for ale and brandy at the Stag's Head or the Elliot Arms."

Preston flushed at the proposal, but said nothing for a few minutes. At length he replied that he took no fermented liquors; and when he had left Lord North he had determined to own no master, and to earn no wage, unconnected with the great work he had in hand as God's minister. "But," he continued, "my boy Perth is young, active, and intelligent. He shall do your bidding; and his earnings, I pray you, to put into my hands, as I would not place a knife in the hands of my son that might slay him."

"If you mean a pruning-knife," said his prosaic neighbour, "he must take one up in his apron when he mounts the ladder; but as it will be a clasped one, I do not see why he should cut himself with it."

"He shall be with you at five to-morrow morning, friend," concluded Preston, who turned into his cottage, whither, as he drank no spirituous liquors, Luke was not anxious to follow him.

"A pragmatical, stuck-up fellow," was the judgment passed by Luke on his neighbour. "If that son of his be like him, I shan't be sorry when the job is done."

Caleb Preston thought no more of Luke voluntarily, excepting when a little secret satisfaction lurked in his mind that a new member had been added to his congregation. He, in the blindness of his self-love, attributed Luke's attendance in the barn to the fame of his preaching, not suspecting

that his neighbour's object had been to obtain secular assistance only. So he came into the little sitting-room, where Leah had prepared her father's evening meal, with a softened feeling towards her and the world generally, which did not show itself in the severe, harsh lines of his ascetic features.

Leah had made the rosemary tea—for the Chinese leaf was too expensive an article for the use of Caleb Preston—and had purchased a pat of fresh butter by exchanging it for some brown sugar from the shop, for her father's enjoyment. Some milk had been obtained by similar means; and now she sat at the table, having poured out his tea, gazing down demurely at her little clasped hands, which looked white from opposition to her black mittens.

Leah was nearly sixteen, fair, with dark brown hair and arch blue eyes, a small nose, more turned up than straight, but which promised to become so at the age of twenty, when the bridge should assert itself. Her mouth was the beauty of her face; it was such a rosebud mouth, so small, full, and fresh-looking, just revealing the sparkle of her white teeth when she smiled. Caleb gave her all the love and more than he had bestowed on his wife, and he looked on her now with natural pride in her comeliness, and with tender anxiety for her future happiness.

"I saw thee not, Leah, at chapel," he said, doubtfully, at length.

"I was there, father, near the door, between Perth and Dick Crozier. I heard all thy discourse. It seems strange that thou shouldst be gifted beyond other men in the power to stir the heart."

"I had it not till it was given to me from on high," her father replied, with an intent look in his eyes.

He spoke only at intervals during his meal; and Leah was too timid to start any subject before her father, though she would have liked to tell him of the post-chaise, filled inside by servants, and outside by their luggage, driving up to the back of the hall, indicating the speedy approach of the rest of the family.

When Caleb Preston had finished his meal, he remembered that Perth had not appeared since the evening service, and he looked disturbed when Leah said her brother had not returned.

He waited for half an hour; and finding that his son was still a truant, he knelt and prayed with his daughter, and finished the evening with the following hymn:—

"Father in heaven, to Thee we pray,
Now night sinks on the dubious way.
Thy holy light from heaven we crave,
Our steps to guide, our souls to save.

"As evening flowers their perfumes blend
With night-winds that to heaven ascend,
So would our prayers sweet incense make;
Keep us this night for Christ's dear sake."

"Poor motherless girl!" said he to himself, as she left the room for her bed-chamber; "how can I, even by incessant watchfulness, take the place that Lucy would have occupied in conducting her safely through the dangers of life—so fair and comely as she is?"

Caleb had a transitory satisfaction in the idea that for the present, at least, she was safe in her sleeping-room; and he walked into his garden, pretending even to himself that he was watching the growth of his fruit trees, but, in reality, with every sense alert to observe the approach of Perth. Some idea that his daughter was a plant too tender for rough usage made him approach her feelings with some reserve and delicacy; but his own conviction of how a son should be governed had been bought by the experience of his own youth, and the result was excessive severity. At present Perth was dutiful, but Caleb knew not how long he would remain so. The young men of his own age worked for the neighbouring farmers, and had the independence which arose from the possession of ready money. They could go to the public-house and treat a friend to a pint of beer, whilst Perth was not permitted to drink fermented liquor himself, and had never a sixpence to bestow anything on another. Thus, however, had Caleb been educated, and he knew of no other safe recipe for making an honest man.

It was a relief to the anxious father when he saw Perth lounging home alone, twitching off the seeded heads of the hemlock, and thinking that angelica belonged to the same family—a belief which he ventured to suggest to his father, so soon as he met him.

This led the conversation to the point Caleb had at heart—that Perth should perform the duty he had promised for him to the gardener at the hall. The father had the notion in his head that Perth would stipulate that he should receive the sum which would be due for the job; but the thoughts of the youth rushed onwards to the chance of being nearer to the beautiful vision which had haunted his memory for more than three years. It would be strange, he argued, if, with such opportunities, he should not see her again. The thought, too, possessed him that he would show her, in some way, that he was acquainted with Latin and Greek, of which she had surmised he knew nothing. He assented, therefore, with an alertness which pleased Caleb, who put down the willingness shown by his son to a dutiful disposition.

At five o'clock on the following morning Perth might have been seen placing a long ladder against the wall, which was thickly covered with living and dead foliage, this last having lodged in the transverse branches for years undisturbed. It took some hours to clear away the rubbish which occupied the place

where green buds should have expanded, and long tendrils have clung; then the truant branches had to be reclaimed, and fastened to the old stone walls in a neat and business-like manner. Perth liked his occupation, busied as he was amongst the sweet jasmine and climbing roses, fanned by the fresh morning air, and cheered by the newly-risen sun.

Presently he moved his ladder to the side of a small window. All the windows were small in this old house. The casement was thrown back, and inside were preparations for breakfast for two persons. Could *she* be one of those two? He had heard that part of the family had arrived on the previous evening; but he had not heard that the young lady and her governess had been of the party. His work would occupy him a week, however, in going all round the old mansion, and before the expiration of that time he trusted he should see her. This hope had lightened his step, and flashed in his eyes, as he had approached the hall that morning.

Whilst he worked and speculated, and conducted the fragile branches, with a tender hand, to bloom round the window-sill, he heard the door of the room open, and a light, soft step fall on the carpet. He stopped his hammering involuntarily, and looked into the room. A girl, with soft, light hair flowing over her shoulders, and with the outline of her delicate pink cheek turned away, had walked to the harpsichord and struck a few notes without sitting

down. She accompanied them with the fragment of a song, which she murmured, seemingly, with the unconsciousness of idleness. Perth could scarcely believe that the little child he had last seen in the park should have grown up into such graceful girlhood. He thought he should like to see the whole of her face; but a sudden recollection that he was but a job gardener, and had no right to look at ladies, made him clutch at and shake a branch laden with roses, the sudden bending of which across the window attracted the attention of Miss Elliot, who came to see what had occurred. She looked out, and flushed with surprise at seeing Perth so near her. The sunbeams, striking through the abundant climbing plants, illuminated her head and face in capricious lights and shadows. She formed a charming picture of youth, beauty, and innocence amongst those summer flowers.

Perth twisted a rose branch from the tree in his nervousness, and began to knock in nails most assiduously, whilst the young lady turned away to salute her companion, who had just entered. Perth felt his heart beat tumultuously at the conviction that the governess, his worshipped *Arithmetica*, was in his neighbourhood. He dared not look, and was content for a few minutes to listen to the voice, the tones of which had haunted his dreams since he had last heard them.

Memory plays strange metamorphoses in the

brains of the absent. The voice which had seemed so sweet to Perth in imagination was now deeper and somewhat querulous.

"The tea is cold," said the elder lady; "the toast is flabby; the eggs are hard!"

The voice of the younger girl uttered in extenuation that the breakfast had been ready for more than an hour, on which the governess—who did not pay for it—ordered the tea and the eatables away, and that fresh eggs and toast should be brought.

Presently the lull in the room that followed the exit of the servant allowed the strokes of Perth's hammer to become audible.

"What is that horrid noise?" inquired the elder of the two.

"Only the gardener nailing up the flowers," replied Miss Elliot.

"A very inconvenient time to choose—just as we are having our breakfast!"

"Shall I tell him to leave off?"

"No; 'tis no matter."

As Perth heard the door opening, and the clatter of the renewed tea-service, he thought he might seize the opportunity of this diversion to look at the face of his adored.

Alas that memory and fancy should have again combined to cheat him! The lady did not look so young as she had done three years previously. Her figure was thicker, her eyelids were somewhat

shrivelled, and, instead of the wavering bloom which came and went over the downy skin of Miss Elliot, there was on the cheek of the governess a bright pink spot, composed of what looked like little broken veins of red under the skin. The expression, also, was sullen and discontented.

She helped herself to the largest egg by the aid of an accurately-measuring eye, and, as she broke the shell, went on with her grumblings.

"'Tis so provoking that Mr. Elliot should have come down so much sooner than I had intended. I am sure I don't know who can do plain work in this stupid village, and my morning dresses are all cut out, but not made."

"We will inquire," said Miss Elliot gently; "probably Margaret may know of some one."

"I don't see how she should, when she was never here before," retorted the governess, determined to have a grievance.

"We need not despair till we have tried," rejoined the young lady; "and at Stoneham we might certainly obtain a sempstress to do your work."

Perth listened and pondered. The shock his romantic aspirations had received did not prevent his natural acuteness from foreseeing benefit to Leah from the involuntary confidence reposed in him by the governess.

When he dismounted from his ladder at eleven o'clock to eat a crust of bread and drink some water,

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

having refused the offered beer at his father's wish, he asked leave to speak to the lady's-maid, and suggested that his sister Leah was an expert needlewoman, and would be happy to work for the young ladies if required.

CHAPTER V.

"Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the generous heart
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart."

In the course of the morning the intelligence had reached the ears of the governess, and a boy was despatched to fetch Leah from her father's house to receive orders.

Caleb was within when the messenger arrived, and hesitated whether to permit his daughter to go. But a conviction that he should be unable to leave her an adequate provision at his death induced him to consent to a proposition which his jealous love would have led him to negative.

"Thou may'st go, Leah; but remember that thy task must be performed under this roof. Thou must bring the work home."

Leah was quite willing to promise this. There was nothing very attractive to her in the aspect of the great house, filled by strange servants fresh from London, who would probably scoff at Leah's country dress and rustic manners. So she said she would go up in the evening and receive her directions, and return with her task immediately.

Accordingly, after she had attended to her father's evening meal, she put on a clean gown and white apron, and walked across the park to the Hall. She had not put on her hat, not thinking it necessary for so short a distance; yet when she reached the back of the house she regretted that she had not done so, so many were the observations made by the newly-arrived servants on her appearance.

She had knocked at the old oak door, without being able to produce much sound by her small hand, not seeing any knocker or bell. A carving of oak, blackened by age, bordered the door-sill; and Leah examined the rudely-carved figures of Prudence, Temperance, Charity, and some other virtues, till she had need to invoke the one of Patience. At length she ventured to lift the latch, and passed into a paved passage, on one side of which the sounds of loud voices and boisterous laughter gave indications of a lively life. Leah hesitated for a moment, and then tapped at the open door—a slight sound which was unnoticed amidst the uproar within. After a few moments of delay, Leah walked in, and discovered the housekeeper half obscured by the steam of a boiled round of beef which she was carving, and which gave out a grateful smell, accompanied by that of cabbage and suet pudding. She was too busy to notice the intruder; but one of the footmen, putting down the empty tankard of ale which he had been finishing, started up with an exclamation

of wonder at the vision of Leah, as she stood blushing beautifully under her little Pamela cap at the end of the table. Now, Pamela caps had gone out of fashion in cities, and had been succeeded by the Poissard cap, which was not half so becoming, and had been imitated by Englishwomen from the originals worn by the French mob at the Revolution. The women-servants saw that Leah was beautiful, and began to feel spitefully, and to speak tauntingly.

"Where do you come from, my dear?" said the fat butler.

"Fresh from Noah's ark!" cried the housemaid. "Been and robbed her grandmother's chest afore she walked out! Pray, mem, are them curls your own hair, or a wig?"

Aghast and ready to cry at the vexation she felt —when, if the truth were to be told, she had been rather pleased at the reflection in her small looking-glass before she left her father's cottage—Leah could scarcely mutter a few words of explanation, which were greeted by roars of laughter, she knew not wherefore, when a fresh actor appeared on the scene—no other than Sir Edgar South, who, having rung his bell with no visible result for half an hour, during which time the ill-managed merriment had prevented its being heard or attended to, had descended to see how his servant was occupied, that he might have the luxury of swearing at him twenty minutes sooner than if he had waited for his advent.

When he reached the servants' hall, he understood at a glance the situation, even without the aid of the few murmured words which he caught from the lips of the terrified and perturbed Leah. There were the men, jocular and insolent; the women-servants, with greasy lips, shooting out from them "arrows, even bitter words." Sir Edgar had witnessed such scenes, under different and softened phases, in polite society, when some unfortunate Freshman had found himself in the company of the well-established two and three-year men at college. He was reckless and good-natured, notwithstanding the attack formerly made on Leah's cat; and he felt every chivalrous sentiment rise in his breast at the vexation and mortification visible in the countenance of so sweet a girl.

"Scoundrel! What do you mean by your insolence in not answering the bell? Madam, allow me to conduct you to some society more fitted to your deserts than that of these ill-bred cubs."

He took her hand respectfully as he spoke, and led her away, leaving the servants dumb with dismay at the unexpected interference.

When he had thus rescued her from an embarrassing position, he felt much puzzled what to do with Leah whilst he announced her arrival to Miss Bruce. She looked too refined for the kitchen, too plainly dressed for the drawing-room. Mr. Elliot was in the library; and he did not like to lead her

to the school-room, where the ladies were sitting, unannounced. The glimpses he took of his companion showed him that her share of beauty might make enemies in other scenes than in the servants' hall. She had given way to the tears which her shame and anger had prevented her shedding whilst in the presence of her tormentors; and Sir Edgar, good-naturedly concerned, led her to the billiard-room, and fetched a glass of water, which he held to her lips, uttering all the time such topics of consolation as he could think of at a short notice.

"Pray do not cry! Why should you care for what these ill-bred folks say? You are too pretty to need the adornment of fashion. Hang it! you're beautiful! Don't cry, there's a darling girl! There's your pocket-handkerchief," for Leah had dropped it. "Eh! what's this? I've seen this handkerchief before. 'L. P.,' and all this fine needlework! Why, you are not—no, you can't be—the little girl who lent me the handkerchief to wash my face when the young lout thrashed me?"

"It was not this handkerchief, but another one like it," said Leah, sobbing.

"Of course it was not this one. Do you think I have not treasured that token of your girlish kindness, Miss Preston? I have it now, up in my drawer, and always carry it about with me."

Of this, the first part of the speech was true, the second false. The handkerchief had returned from

the wash before Sir Edgar South left the Hall; and his valet, knowing it did not belong to his master, had left it in the wardrobe. When he had returned thither on the preceding day, he had looked wonderingly on the strange waif amongst his property, and remembered the thrashing he had got from the boy Preston.

He was a handsome young man, with a quantity of soft brown hair, curled as carefully over his shoulders as that of Petrarch, when he avoided turning corners of streets lest the wind should derange the clusters; a macaroni in his dress, as those gentlemen were called who made the study of their persons their primary occupation; reckless and extravagant, and selfishly intent on the gratification of every transient inclination; but bold and brave, and, by fits and starts, generous and kind-hearted.

Men and women are never wholly consistent, but must be judged by the general colour of their lives and actions. Nero must sometimes have been gentle and loving, or flowers would not have been strewn on his tomb; and Charles I., the most uxorious of monarchs, was known to quarrel with his wife occasionally.

The sound of a distant step aroused Sir Edgar from his contemplation of so much of the white bosom of Leah as gleamed through the folds of her decent muslin handkerchief, and he left her, whis-

pering that he would return and conduct her to Miss Bruce.

"There is a poor little awkward girl crying down-stairs. I think the servants have been making jokes at her expense. She says she wants to see you about some sewing," said Sir Edgar to the governess in as careless a tone as he could assume.

"Oh! I'm glad she is come. Where is she?"

"I am going down-stairs, and I will send her up," said the young man; and, descending the stairs whistling, he proceeded to the billiard-room, where, taking Leah's hand, and begging her not to be afraid, he led her up to the door of the school-room, and with a low bow and a tender pressure of her fingers he bade her adieu.

The unsuspecting governess was soon immersed in the eagerness of issuing orders, which Leah listened to without understanding a word. Her soft eyes sought those of the lady inquiringly; but she had been so fluttered, first by the raillery of the servants, and then by the respectful consolation of the young gentleman, that no word uttered by Miss Bruce made the slightest impression on her understanding.

"This is to be seamed, and this hemmed, and the other back-stitched," said the governess for the third time. "I fear you are very stupid," she added angrily.

"I will do my best, miss."

"Well, do one dress first, and let me see how you contrive it."

Thus commanded, Leah picked up her wits, and having repeated the directions to be sure that at length she understood them, left the room with a low courtesy.

As she passed down the stairs she looked about furtively, in the half-expectation of seeing Sir Edgar. She was not disappointed; no duchess could have received a more respectful bow than Sir Edgar executed for the benefit of the beautiful needlewoman. She flushed all over with pleasure, and hurried onwards. Sir Edgar saw the accession of lovely bloom, and smiled triumphantly when she had passed out of sight.

The servants' hall was empty and silent as Leah went out, and she escaped any more rough jests as to her champion, Sir Edgar. She hurried through the park, glad of the cool evening breeze that swept over her flushed cheek, and grasping her bundle of needlework as if her success in life depended on its safety. The delay had been greater than she had anticipated, and when she reached the little garden she saw her father watching for her approach. A vague presentiment of evil had weighed on his spirits. Perth was safe at home and in bed, but his dearer child was out far too late. He had just determined to get his best hat and go to the Hall to seek her, when he saw the gleam of something white amongst the distant clumps of trees, and his heart

began to beat with feverish hope. The spot became more distinct, and presently he detected the little figure on whose happiness, here and hereafter, all his hopes were centred.

Then he turned into the house, ashamed of his anxiety, and, after a few quiet words exchanged between the father and his child, Caleb Preston knelt down with her, and uttered his evening prayers for the protection of Heaven during the gathering darkness and for their future lives.

Leah told her father nothing of the rough treatment she had received from the servants, nor of the interference of Sir Edgar South. The habits of deference exacted by parents in those days made those of confidence impossible. Thus Leah missed the cautions and the interference which might have overshadowed and protected her from the storms which threatened her onward life.

CHAPTER VI.

"Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm."

GRAY.

SIR EDGAR SOUTH wanted but a few months of coming of age. He was heir to a fine fortune, and there had been an agreement between his guardian and Mr. Elliot that an alliance should be formed, when the parties had arrived at a suitable age, between the young baronet and his cousin, Miss Elliot. It was for this reason he came so frequently to make long visits to Mr. Elliot's family. He looked on the young lady with the indifference felt by all men towards any article which they know they may possess if they please—an indifference so evident, even through the courtliness of his manners, that the governess, seeing it all, conceived hopes of captivating the young heir herself. He considered her as utterly beyond the possibility of marriage with him, and expended on her the attentions which he feared to lavish on her pupil, lest he should be thereby compromised. He was feeling rather dull, notwithstanding Miss Bruce's attentions, when the sight of the young needlewoman gave him what he considered an object of legitimate pursuit.

Her beauty reconciled him to his residence at the Hall; and her youth, simplicity, and evident innocence made him more eager to deprive her of the last of these advantages.

Leah worked industriously to get one of the dresses finished, that she might have an excuse for going again to the Hall. Sir Edgar saw the slender figure approaching through one of the avenues, but he knew too well that to show anxiety to speak to Leah would be to spoil his own game. In fact, the girl had made up her mind that she would not have anything to say to him if she did see him. Her imagination had pictured to her various interviews, in which he should be tender and consolatory, as on the previous occasion, and in which she should disengage her hand from the gentle pressure of his, and beg him to keep his distance. While her fingers fled over the delicate fabric of Miss Bruce's gown, and small stitches succeeded each other in quick precision, her memory painted to her the pitying face of Sir Edgar, and she unconsciously murmured some of his unforgotten words. He had said, too, that he had kept her handkerchief. What might that mean? Something, no doubt, too delightful to be defined; so she did not attempt to explain to herself his meaning. And now she wore her best frock and an embroidered white apron which had belonged to her mother, as she walked demurely under the shadow-

trees to the Hall, with her work neatly folded, and covered up in a clean handkerchief.

Sir Edgar had seen her approach; and lounging into the school-room, where Miss Elliot was practising her music-lesson, he challenged the governess to take a turn with him under the trees. Miss Bruce looked at her pupil doubtfully, who said quietly, "I can go on very well by myself;" on which the governess arose with a thrill of delight, believing that the auspicious hour had arrived for which she had been anxiously waiting for the last fifteen years, and that Sir Edgar was about to declare his passion, and throw himself and his title and wealth at her feet.

When Leah obtained an entrance to the Hall, she was told that she could not speak to Miss Bruce, as that lady was walking with Sir Edgar somewhere in the park. She might sit down and wait, if she liked, in the servants' hall.

She preferred, she replied, to call again; for the recollections of that room were not pleasant ones, and she did not like to remain there as a mark for more insolent expressions. As she returned, she saw in the distance Miss Bruce standing on a terrace at the end of an avenue, looking down at the distant landscape, as it was illuminated in golden patches by the setting sun; and leaning on the marble balustrade by her, with his face looking into hers with intense earnestness, was Sir Edgar.

"Experimentum fiat in corpore vili," said the

youth to himself. "This young woman wants to marry my acres, and to take me as part of the live-stock. I make use of her to carry out my plans on that prettiest of Dissenting ministers' daughters. I mean *her* to love me for myself before I have done with her. As for this woman, she is ten years older than I, and I believes she is twenty years more knowing: we shall see."

Leah looked once at the pair, who seemed full of love-talk from their relative positions, and turned away. She walked more slowly, and, with the irresistible desire possessed by those who are attracted towards one of the opposite sex for self-torment, she turned and looked again. This time she suffered an added pang; for Sir Edgar looked at her and said something with a light laugh to his companion, who laughed also—that subservient echo which the inferior gives to the higher in wealth or social position. Leah hurried away as if driven by the Furies. What could he have said to turn her into ridicule? She hated him; she loathed the thought of him; she would never see him again. Hot, angry tears were wet on her face as she drew near her home; and she had to stoop as if to pick a wild flower, that she might dash them away unperceived, lest her father should be watching for her return.

Caleb was in the little garden, darkened by twilight shadows, and wet with rising dew, waiting till

he should hear the step of her who was the very sun of his existence, and who had the power, by her presence, to make for him light out of darkness. The homage paid by the aged to the young is very touching. They pour out so much of love to their idols; they receive so little in return. But, sooner or later, love is its own avenger. If we live on to age, we go through the same torture as we in our youth inflicted. We then in turn carry our withered flowers, thinking to mingle them with the blooming coronals of youth, and turn away mortified if we find them cast aside and forgotten. How should the young care for love such as age can give, when they have that blessing in abundance from their coevals?

The dying savage is placed under a tree, and left there, whilst the stream of life flows on. He sees his warrior sons wielding the arms his withered hands can no longer grasp; he sees his grandchildren rushing onwards in pursuit of their prey, forgetful of the hand that first guided their small feet over the desert. His daughter clings to her husband, and remembers her father with a faint affection. All have their pursuits, their pleasures, their cares; and the solemn silence of solitude falls over the scene, on which will shortly be the deeper hush of death. It is not much otherwise in civilised life; and if the aged look for sympathy, it must be from their contemporaries, and not from their descendants.

Caleb's quick perceptions and jealous love soon perceived the trouble in Leah's countenance, and tried to win from her its cause.

"Was thy work approved, child?"

"I do not know, father. The lady was not at home."

"Then thou wert disappointed of the praise thou didst expect?"

Leah tried to smile to comfort her father.

"No, father; that is, not much. I should like to have heard, if it was right, about doing the rest. I had better step up again to-morrow evening to inquire," she said, with the quick indecision of a loving heart; and Caleb, who, though he disliked these visits to the Hall, saw a gleam of comfort in Leah's face at the idea, and had not the heart to tell her not to go.

CHAPTER VII.

"Oh! how this tyrant doubt torments my breast;
My thoughts, like birds when frighten'd from their nest,
Around the place where all was hush'd before
Flutter and hardly settle any more."

OTWAY.

THE hostages to fortune given by Caleb were becoming a double source of anxiety to him. The only rule of which he approved was the iron rule; and children as well as nations will sometimes rebel against coercion, and oppose to iron rule an iron will. Perth's vanity was bringing him into trouble which, with less of that failing, he might have escaped. A large collection of plants had arrived from London, part being intended to ornament the Hall, and part to be planted in the borders or in the kitchen garden. Perth had been kept late by the head gardener to assist in unpacking these, and to carry them under the shelter of the greenhouse till they could be placed in the most advantageous position. In the faint desire for some new interest felt by idle folks where novelty is rare, as in a country house nearly empty, Sir Edgar, accompanying the two young ladies, strolled to the grounds where the

gardeners were taking the plants from the cart. Perth turned as he rose from placing some heavy pots on the earth, and saw his ancient adversary standing by the side of his divinity, whom he could not endure to see in such a place, though reality had in some degree revealed too much to admit of the ancient amount of his worship. He remembered all the lady had said of his ignorance, and recollected with pleasure how his fist had become acquainted with the delicate nose of his rival. His hand closed involuntarily as he thought how much more forcible would have been his blows now.

Sir Edgar looked at Perth doubtfully. The richly-attired, handsome young man, with wealth at his command, could afford to forget the mortification of the past, and to forgive its infliction, if he thought of it. It was one of many battles he had fought; for fighting at public schools was more common then than now. Perth did not understand this. He was swelling with anger and mortification at being seen in his ordinary clothes, his face flushed and embrowned by labour, and his brow showing symptoms of the primeval curse.

"Dear me! what a queer plant!" said Miss Bruce. "What can be the name of it?"

"Some of these plants are intended for the herb-garden, miss," said the head gardener, avoiding an answer.

"But what is the name of this one?"

"*Herba Paris*, *Triphyllos Braziliano*, or true-love of Brazil," said Perth, after a slight pause, finding that either his principal did not hear or could not answer.

"Bless us, boy!" said Sir Edgar, somewhat contemptuously, "where did you get such long words? Can you spell them? I dare say not."

Perth spelt the words deliberately.

"This young fellow cuts you out, Mr. Luke," continued the young baronet, stooping and picking off the white flower from the head of the plant. "It bears a pretty name, however; but why of Brazil? Should not true love bloom in our own climate?" and he presented the blossom to Miss Bruce.

Miss Elliot now addressed a few words to Perth, and asked the names and properties of several other plants and shrubs, which he answered more modestly, having felt the ridicule with which Sir Edgar had assailed him. He gave the English and botanical names, and their derivations from either the Latin or Greek language. Miss Elliot listened with politeness. She had always liked Perth for his defence of the cat; and she ranged herself on his side now, feeling that her betrothed had offered her an unintentional slight in giving the true-love flower to her governess. She was too simple-minded to guess that the apparent devotion on the part of Sir Edgar to Miss Bruce was unreal.

Whilst Sir Edgar coquetted about the flower true-love with the governess, and Miss Elliot was listening to the names and explanations uttered by Perth, there was another auditor, whose breast was filled with rage and mortification. Luke, the head gardener, had been put to shame before his underlings by a youth of eighteen; and he determined that in future the most ignorant of his staff should maltreat the punica rather than keep so conceited an upstart in his grounds. Accordingly, he told Perth that he should not require his services on the morrow, and that he would call on Mr. Preston on the following day, and settle with him for his son's services. In vain Perth urged that he had only done a small part of the nailing up climbing plants round the house. The plants might all die for what he cared, retorted Luke angrily, rather than that he should keep such a jackanapes on the premises.

Perth went home crestfallen. He was too proud to ask Luke not to tell his father of his knowledge of Greek and Latin, though he knew the information would raise such a storm or such a freezing chill in the household as would end by driving Perth from it. He took his beloved books from their hidden place under the bolster of his bed, and, going into the forest, he dug a hole in an open space, where the roots were least entangled, and buried them.

He had told his father that he had been dismissed, and that Mr. Luke would call on him next day.

"What fault did he find with thee?" said Caleb, who, though he had not been eager for his son's employment at the Hall, was provoked that Perth had been dismissed.

"The young ladies asked the name of one of the plants," said Perth; "I gave it, because he was so long in answering that I thought he did not know what to say."

Caleb knew that one story was good till the other was told, and waited for the other version of it. He did not doubt what Perth had said was substantially true, but small circumstances often throw a different colouring on facts.

Perth was working on his father's land when he saw Luke approaching, and felt his heart beat faster.

"I have brought your son's wages for the days he worked for me, neighbour Preston. I shall not want him again."

"In what way did he displease you; or have you no further need of his services? You found him hard-working and intelligent, I suppose?"

"Too clever by half for an old-fashioned man like myself. I don't want to be put down before all my men for not knowing Latin and Greek; the old English names are enough for me."

"I am sure Perth could not put you down by his knowledge of Latin and Greek. He knew but little even of Latin, and that he has forgotten; and of Greek he does not even know the alphabet."

"Then more shame on him for pretending to what he knows nothing about, and putting an honest man out of countenance by such artful ways," said Luke with great indignation. "I have often rejoiced," he continued, "that I never married, and had a pack of children to bring me to trouble."

"I do not think Perth would pretend to what he does not know," said Caleb Preston, trying to keep his temper under control, so that he might not affront one of his congregation, or exhibit himself in unbecoming heat; "however, we will call him, and hear what he has to say for himself. You see, neighbour, I can be more certain of my son's ignorance on the points of ancient literature," he continued, "because I was myself caught in the snare in former days, and gave up my hours to the study which leadeth to destruction. My days and nights were given to unrighteous literature, and I thought not of those books which only contain the words of eternal life. I have put them aside for ever, and forbidden my son to read therein. I know they are hid from his sight, and would convey no more information to *his* eyes than Egyptian hieroglyphics would to thine."

"'Tis all very well, neighbour, but I wish my father had bestowed on me a little of the learning you make so light of. Bless you, man, a fellow need not get drunk if he likes a glass of good beer, nor be puffed up with learning because he can give

the Latin name of a flower when a lady asks him!"

"Touch not; taste not; handle not! Let all such abominations be put away far from the elect of God," said Caleb solemnly.

"Well, neighbour, I don't owe the young man any grudge, and I will not stay and hear your discourse to him; but I think you will find that your children know a thing or two which you never taught them;" and, with that Parthian dart, Luke left the preacher's cottage.

Luke had heard of the rough greeting given by the servants at the Hall to Miss Preston, and of the interference of Sir Edgar; and his knowledge of human nature had supplied the rest of his suggestions to his neighbour.

They had sufficed to make Caleb generally uneasy, the more as they pointed to some unknown and unlawful knowledge possessed by Leah as well as Perth. This gave double asceticism to his voice and manner when Perth obeyed his summons.

"I have heard that of thee, Perth, which I am loath to credit. It is said that thou didst pique thyself on the display of knowledge which, I feel assured, thou didst never possess. Remember, my son, that the ass which wore the lion's skin, and the jay which pilfered the plumage of Juno's bird, both excited ridicule and provoked punishment."

"I did not, my father," was all the reply made

by the youth, who would neither tell a lie nor criminate himself needlessly.

"Then why did our neighbour Luke object to thy speech?"

"I told the name of a flower which he had forgotten."

"He said thou didst give the Latin and Greek derivations."

Perth was silent.

"Was it true?"

"Father, it was!"

"How didst thou become acquainted with such?"

Perth looked to the window, whence the decaying light streamed into the dusky room, and to the low ceiling, for some form of words by which he might turn aside his father's wrath; but a young warrior thrust suddenly into a combat without his weapons could not have felt more utterly helpless than Perth. At length he gained courage from despair, and said—

"Father! I know a little Latin: you taught it to me yourself some years since. I know a little Greek: I taught myself that."

"Whence did you get the books?" said Caleb, a dire expression of anger settling itself in his eyelids and knitted brows; for the reference to his former tuition had provoked doubly his ire.

"I was ashamed of my ignorance, and I took the books from the chest."

"Were the books mine or yours?" said Caleb Preston with frightful clearness and precision.

"I think I might justly consider the Latin grammar, out of which I used to learn, as my own," said the boy. "The dictionary was yours of course, and the Greek grammar and lexicon also."

Whilst his son spoke, the knowledge that he had been deceived let loose a torrent of rage in the breast of the father, which perturbed him the more from the outward calm which he compelled himself to assume.

"So you have become a thief, and robbed your father. I have nourished at my table one who, for years probably, has been deceiving me—eating my bread, and outraging my commands in every thought of his heart and every action of his life. Now hear the sentence you have brought on yourself. Bring back the books you have stolen, and ask pardon of God, and of your father, for your sin; or never again come into my presence, or sit at meat in my house, or sleep under my roof."

The young man rose up, stunned by the enunciation of his father's wrath. He had not thought that to take his father's books could have been counted as theft. All his nascent manhood rose against the injustice of the accusation and the harshness of the penalty. He reeled towards the door, and passed out into the night, without any observation on the sentence pronounced against him. At

the moment when he went out into the darkness he heard the click of the lock, as his father turned the key, as if he had determined that the exclusion should be final. Perth turned and looked at the sullen-looking door, which seemed as obstinate and determined as his father; then at the window, through which the fire still flashed, giving a notion of warmth and comfort he was forbidden to enjoy; and his heart was full of bitterness. He could not know that the heart of Caleb Preston yearned to recall him. His father persuaded himself that Perth would return and show him where the books were concealed, and beg his pardon; and Caleb felt the warm tears rush into his eyes when he thought that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Anger is like
A full hot horse; allow him but his way,
Self-mettle tires him."

If anger raged in the bosom of the father, it triumphed over every feeling of duty in the breast of the son. He had been turned out of his father's house for a fault which other men would have considered a virtue. The summer evening was not chilly; and he went into the stable, where it was his duty to feed and bed down the old blind pony. The creature heard his step, and turned round with a whining of satisfaction. Then Perth flung his arm over the pony's neck, and wept out all his bitterness and wrongs. "Old friend! I must share thy bed to-night," he said, throwing down a bundle of straw in a corner of the stable for a pillow. He lay down and tried to think; but his throbbing pulses and the hot tears that streamed from his eyes banished alike continuous efforts of memory and sleep.

"When thousand thoughts begin and end in one,
The refuge sought from each is found in none."

He only could feel on the present; not reason on the past, nor plan for the future. At length he wept till

he was calm; but this state of mind he did not attain till the stars were fading into the grey haze of a summer dawn. Then he remembered that he must have a change of clothes. To such he had an indubitable right; for had he not given the labour which had purchased them, and many comforts in the little household besides? His mind was made up. He climbed into the window of his bedroom silently, and put together the few articles of dress which belonged to him. He had nothing else there; for his other treasures were buried in the forest. He was determined not to give them up—determined never to admit himself to be in the wrong when he did not believe that he had been guilty of any sin. As he moved about his room noiselessly, he heard his father's voice in tones of anguish. He listened, and expostulations of fervent prayer were poured on the silent calm of night:—

"O Thou who madest and orderest all things, look down, I beseech Thee, on this my erring son; bring him by a sense of his crime into the paths of holiness and peace. Grant that he may be one of Thy elect—a brand plucked from the burning—a peculiar creature marked out by Thy grace to show forth Thy glory and power in this world, and to be united to those made perfect by Thy presence in eternity."

Perth heard. "My poor father!" was his thought. "What mistaken views of life are his!" Anger had nearly subsided into pity; for Perth, like all clever,

energetic youths, thought all wisdom foolishness, excepting that which his own opinions decided to be wise. He commiserated his father for his narrow sectarian prejudices, and, taking a lofty view of the subject, could afford to forgive him. Yet the stronger this feeling became, the less was he disposed to sue for pardon himself. Nature suggested that he had no right to disobey his father, nor to possess himself of his father's property illegally; on the other side, he argued that his father was wrong in theory and tyrannical in practice, and that at eighteen he had a right to think and act for himself. He knew not where to go to obtain another meal, nor how to get work by which he might be fed; but one feeling overrode every other—he would never admit he was in the wrong. He made his clothes into a small bundle in a handkerchief, and left the room, as he had entered it, by the window. He would sell one suit of his clothes, he thought—for he had two; and with the money thus obtained he would travel towards the sea-coast, and get employment as a farm-labourer.

He returned to the shed, dignified by the name of stable. The blind pony knew all about the warm and cold corners in it more than his young master, who flung himself on the straw, and, wearied by many emotions, slept at length, or rather, slumbered; for he was conscious that a slender figure in white garments, with her dark hair floating over her

shoulders, stood at the opening of the shed, partly in shadow, partly revealed by the moonlight. He dreamed that the spirit of his mother was standing there, looking down on him, and weeping. He fancied he heard the sound of stifled sobs. Presently the figure came to his side, and stooping down, kissed him tenderly on the forehead, and placed a small piece of twisted paper in his hand. She went to the door and turned back once more, with a lingering look of love, and disappeared into the moonlight.

It was Leah, his sister, who thus bade him a long farewell. She had stolen down-stairs, and listened with terror and sympathy to the denunciations of her father, and had crept up weeping to bed when Perth left the house.

Poor Leah had griefs and mortifications unconnected with Perth, but she was full of sorrow for his irritated brain and wounded pride. Her father had never excited any feeling of affection in the heart of his son. Perth had felt admiration of, and reverence for, his father; but the severity of his rule had stifled all feeling of love. To Leah his manner had been more indulgent. She saw through his small foibles, and recognised his integrity, his virtue, even his tenderness, through the rough and frozen exterior with which those qualities were iced over.

Leah, whose heart overflowed with sympathy for every living creature, had the strange power of placing herself at once, and without previous con-

sideration, in the situation of the object who called it forth. She never could have preached to a cold, careless, or inattentive congregation; yet when his flock were unmoved by Caleb Preston's eloquence, Leah suffered far more for her father than he ever felt mortified himself by his failure to touch their feelings or to convince their reason. On these occasions Leah was always ready to drop some remark, picked up in returning from the evening service, to prove that by some, at least, of his congregation his powers had been felt and appreciated.

I do not suppose that a person as near to perfection as anything created could become would excite much love. It is the weaknesses united to the strength in the human character which endear a man to his fellows. To others Caleb was a hard man —severe to himself, and not indulgent to others—of strict integrity, but exacting his due with more precision than mercy. Leah saw in him, besides these qualities, a secret love of applause, and that feeling of vanity which came out more strongly in his love. The consciousness of this failing, which he had felt to have mingled with his love of profane learning, had been one of the reasons for which he had put aside that cause of stumbling and rock of offence; but Caleb was unconscious the evil spirit had only taken another form—that his spirits rose or fell in proportion as his barn, now called a chapel, was well or ill attended.

When Leah had listened to the examination of Perth, she had been deeply moved for her father's outraged authority, and still more deeply for her brother's grief. She thought Perth was hardly treated. When her father's voice arose in prayer, and he, deeply moved, was too much occupied to attend to any trivial sounds in the house, Leah had listened to the movements in Perth's room, and, having put on a few garments hastily, she entered his bed-chamber just after he had left it. She saw at once that the old oak chest was nearly empty, and knew that Perth meditated flight. She was too well acquainted with the force and obstinacy of his character to expect that any entreaties of hers would change his purpose; so she twisted up in a bit of paper the four shillings and sixpence found in the pocket of her dead mother—the only money to which she had any right—and, finding Perth sleeping in the pony's shed, placed the money in his hand. She would not awake him whilst he could forget some of the bitterness of his mortification in sleep. Thus she parted from him without the farewell kiss for which her heart yearned; for she felt that, when she saw her father on the following day, she should be forbidden to hold converse with one under the ban of Caleb Preston's displeasure.

The next day Perth's place was empty at the breakfast-table, and that no morning meal would be spread for him made the big tears gather fast in

Leah's eyes. The father's heart was not unmoved; but he was convinced that, after a little struggle, hunger would bring back the truant to the paternal roof, full of contrition and promises of amendment, with the disputed abstracted books in his hands to be placed at his father's disposal.

Leah had no such expectation, and but a feeble hope that he might still be sleeping in the pony's shed; or, if he had left it, that he might return there.

She, therefore, took her portion of bread and mug of milk, of which she purposely had not partaken, to the stable, not unseen by Caleb, who loved her the more for the tenderness she showed towards her disgraced brother. It was a comfort to the old man's heart to think that Perth should not be without food; and he had not the grief of knowing that an hour after the old pony had smelt out the bread and eaten it, and, knocking over the mug of milk with his nose, had crushed it to bits with his hoofs. Perth, having left the stable early, had never seen the offering left for him by sororal affection.

CHAPTER IX.

"Some small reserve of near and inward love,
Some unsuspected hoard of darling griefs."

The anxiety and sorrow which had come upon Leah about her brother had neutralised in some degree the grief she felt with regard to Sir Edgar South's seeming ridicule, after the tender championship of his manner towards her. She was ashamed of thinking so much about him—ashamed of her anxiety to see him again. She had sufficient self-command not to go up to the Hall for further orders; but with infinite care and trouble, after four foul copies, she produced the following note. Leah had been taught to write well and to spell perfectly by her father, but she had never exercised the power; and though the note was a perfect specimen of caligraphy, every flourish being in the right place, it wanted the easy flow which graces the epistles of female servants in the present day, who, as a rule, write and receive more letters than their mistresses—the reason being obvious: the servants waste time which belongs to their employers; the mistress economises time which is her own.

Thus ran Leah's letter :—

"To Miss Bruce.

"MADAM,—Will you kindly inform me if the dress was made properly, and if I am to go on with the others according to the same pattern?

"Your dutiful servant,

"LEAH PRESTON."

The little boy on whom Leah expended a penny to take this to the Hall brought back a bit of paper, on which was written hastily, "Half an inch too small round the waist."

Leah thought this was permission to go on with her work, taking notice to avoid the mistake in the circumference of the lady's waist.

She sat at her bedroom window, stitching away with unremitting industry. The finishing of one task after another was the ambition of the hour. Women have an advantage over men in this small employment of their fingers—employment with an object that does not tax their intellects. Leah forced her mind away from the recollection of Sir Edgar by industry which made her brain reel, at length, by the quick and incessant movement of her right hand beneath her eyes. She felt that she had resisted the temptation of going to the Hall, and was proud of the strength of mind she had thus evinced.

She pondered deeply on her brother's fate. Poor Perth! She was glad she had given him those four shillings and sixpence. She could not have made up her mind to part with them on any occasion less urgent. Whilst he had that sum, he could not be without food; and he was so strong and able to work, that she comforted herself with the hope that he would soon obtain occupation. She did not know how difficult it is, unless at a period when hay is to be got up, or the harvest to be gathered, for a stranger to obtain employment by farmers, who have their regular labourers, of whose powers for work and characters they have had experience.

Perth walked to Stoneham on the morning after the night he had spent in his father's shed. He hoped his father would get Dick Crozier to clean out the stable, and feed the old pony up at night. He was very grateful to Leah for the four shillings and sixpence, and, from a strange confusion of thought and feeling, it seemed to him as if his mother had given it to him, and approved of his conduct. So like did Leah appear in that moonlight scene to the image of his dead mother, as he had last seen her, stretched out in the sad calm of death.

He wanted to save the silver, to which he attached an adventitious value; and the object of his visit to Stoneham was to dispose of a suit of his clothes, whereby he might obtain money enough to

travel with less anxiety about the means of subsistence. The clothes, his best suit, would be cumbersome to carry, and the money was indispensable.

He went to an old-clothes shop, and presented the suit for sale; but the sum offered by the master of the shop seemed to the youth so far below its value, that he tied up the clothes again in a parcel, and walked away. A young man who had been standing at the door, and had heard the discussion, unobserved by Perth, touched him on the arm, and asked for a few words with him, proposing a neighbouring public-house as the best place for an interview. Perth said shortly that it was not his custom to frequent such places, and he had better communicate what he had to say then and there.

Outside the town of Stoneham there was a venerable avenue of elms, through which the public had a right of way, and under these trees rustic seats had been placed. Towards one of these the youth conducted Perth, and told him that he should like to become the purchaser of his clothes, on two conditions. One was, that he might try them on, to see if they would fit; another, that Perth should wait for a fortnight, till he should be able to pay him the money, which he expected to receive on the 15th of the following month, which was the day appointed for the *fête* at the old Hall. He tried on the coat at once, and thought it would do. Certainly, there was no glass near to see his own reflection, nor

any still water, so the becomingness the young man was obliged to take for granted; but he expressed anxiety to complete the bargain, and Perth assented to the proposal, for he knew not to whom to apply to purchase his property, now that he had left the old-clothes shop in disgust. He only stipulated that the clothes should remain with him till the money was forthcoming, to which his customer agreed willingly.

This plan had its disadvantages. It compelled Perth to remain longer than he wished in his own neighbourhood; and he felt an invincible dislike to apply for work to the farmers, who were many of them members of his father's congregation, and who would inquire into the cause of the rupture, and feel but little sympathy with Perth for his love of the dead languages.

He must expend some of Leah's gift in buying bread; for his appetite was that of a youth who had not yet finished growing, and he required more than a small amount of nourishment. Moreover, he had been accustomed to a comfortable bed every night, with snowy sheets, smoothed by Leah's neat hands; and though the pony's shed had not been a bad substitute for one night, Perth felt he should prefer sleeping without his clothes, of which he felt the unpleasant constraint in the hours set apart for repose.

So he engaged a bed, for which he was to pay threepence each night, not being able to get any-

thing at all clean at a cheaper rate. This would amount to three shillings and ninepence for the fifteen nights, paid in advance, and would leave him only ninepence for food for fifteen days, which must elapse before he received payment for his clothes. The bed, however, was a place where he could leave the encumbering suit, as none other was placed in the small closet in which it stood; and when he asked permission of the master of the house to leave his clothes there, he good-naturedly advised him to lock the door when he went out, and place the key in his pocket.

Perth was not at first unhappy in his compelled inactivity. Luckily for him, the weather was deliciously balmy, the sun having just power enough to warm, and not to scorch; for it was the last day of May, and all nature seemed redolent of perfume and instinct with sparkling life. He had eaten some bread for his breakfast, and was on his way to the avenue, with the intention of going over for the fiftieth time the rules of that fatal Greek grammar which had been the cause of his expulsion from home, when temptation assailed him, as temptation does assail, in different ways, both the young and impulsive and the old and ease-loving.

The article, the contemplation of which made Perth pause and linger as he passed down the street of Stoneham, and at which he looked back with the yearning fondness with which a mother eyes the toy

she longs to purchase for her first-born, when her empty pocket forbids the indulgence, was nothing more than a tattered old copy of Homer's Iliad. It was lying on the counter of the grocer's shop, where Perth had purchased the waste paper for his father's stores. The master of the shop, seeing Perth passing, had called him in, and asked what he would give for the old book. The eagerness the boy had shown, three years previously, to purchase the records of some unknown tongue had given him the hope that he might get some money out of the boy's pocket to reimburse him for his former generosity in giving away the small copy of the Æneid.

The mercenary tradesman saw the eyes of Perth sparkle as he touched reverently the well-worn paper, made yellow and fleecy by age.

"What is the price?"

"Two shillings."

"Two shillings!" exclaimed the boy in dismay.

"I'm told," said Mr. Reece, the grocer, "'tis a very fine edition. Mr. Grogram, the schoolmaster, said so."

"'Twas a pity he did not buy it himself, then," retorted Perth, not knowing that the schoolmaster had sold it, as being the property of a departed usher, with the boys' old copy-books, to Mr. Reece for a very small amount.

"Does not your father want some more waste paper?" said the grocer.

"I believe he will in a day or two. They had come nearly to the bottom of the box when they sent for lard from the Hall," replied the youth.

"Shall you fetch it, or will he come himself?"

"He will come himself, probably, and pay for it at the same time."

"Ah, well! He is not so keen at a bargain as you are. Poor man! His thoughts are always wool-gathering in the Promised Land, as they call it in the Bible. You may take the book at two shillings, and I'll charge him the two shillings on to the waste paper: he'll never be the wiser."

Perth heard the murmur of the grocer's voice; but he had opened at the second book, where the poet has described the march of the innumerable armies to battle—the splendour of their armour, which shone like fire—the order which evolved from disorder, as they formed like swans on the springs of Cayster, preparing for flight—and their multitudes and eagerness for their prey, as swarms of flies which gather round the shepherd's cottage when milk first moistens the pails.

There was something that struck Perth particularly in the nature of the last simile. Though a courtly poet might have been shocked at the bathos, Perth had seen the fact sufficiently often to value the truth of the resemblance.

"Well?" said Mr. Reece interrogatively, angry at not having received any answer to what he con-

sidered a most generous proposal. "I can't stand here all night, young man, whilst you're fingering my property about."

"I beg pardon, sir. It is rather difficult to make out, for I am a poor scholar," with a sigh; "but will you kindly repeat what you said? I did not hear a word."

"Well, I said that you are a sharper hand at a bargain than your father; and if you will be reasonable in the future, I'll just charge the book in the next bundle of paper I sell him, and you'll get the book for nothing, do you see?"

Perth dropped the book as if it had burnt his fingers, and, restraining the indignation which rose to his lips, he passed out of the shop into the street, and took the road to the avenue, possessed by the longing which the rules of the Greek grammar stimulated rather than repressed. How he thought over his means, or rather, the want of them! How happy the two shillings would have made him! With what zest he would have toiled over the loving task of evolving the sense of the author into English! But he would have but ninepence left when he had paid for his lodging, and that would never support him at his present rate of hunger. He was astonished, now that he had to pay for his food, to find how much he required to satisfy the gnawings of appetite. It was terrible to battle with that internal wolf.

It was strange to Perth, who was ignorant of the fickleness of a boy's fancy, that the desire to possess this tattered copy of Homer was greater than any longing he had ever experienced to see the face of his divine *Arithmetica;* but then, he had forgotten a great part of the past devotion to his deity since the cure produced on him by nearer proximity. To possess his treasure by the means proposed by the grocer would be an act too base to think of. That night he could not forbear to pass the shop before the shutters were put up, to see if any more fortunate man had possessed himself of the book. No; fortunately for his peace of mind, he saw the brown, ragged corner of the darkened calf cover, thrust aside as it was by paper bags of soft sugar, by bars of brown soap and half-consumed cocoa-nut. Then he went home sighing to bed, and said his prayers, praying for Leah, and, after a bitter struggle in his mind, for his father also. On the following afternoon, fortune favoured him.

As he was walking down the street in order to look once more at Mr. Reece's shop, he heard shouts of terror behind him, and the quick rebound of hoofs from the stone pavement. Turning quickly, he saw a horse galloping down the street, with a middle-aged man on its back, who had lost his stirrups and his hat, and was borne along helplessly, and seemed in imminent danger of being dashed to pieces.

To try to interpose any check to an animal like a

horse in full speed requires a cool mind, a steady hand, and a correct eye. Perth decided at once on his line of action. At one place the street narrowed considerably, and he saw that the animal, almost maddened by terror and accelerated speed, was making for this point. Perth placed himself as near as possible to the wall, where the out-jutting of one house and the standing backward of another had formed a little recess, that the sight of him should not make the horse swerve, and awaiting the rush of the infuriated beast, he darted out, seized the bridle, and was thrown down and dragged a few yards on the ground, before the animal, whose head was forced down by the weight of Perth, slackened his speed, and ultimately stopped.

Panting and terrified, the rider flung himself off, and was for a few moments too breathless to thank the youth who, having saved his life, had now scrambled to his feet, and offered the reins, of which he still retained hold, to the late rider.

"Take him to the George for me, there's a good fellow. I might have had a nasty accident but for your catching the head of the brute. I shall not ride him again. There's half-a-crown for you. Tell the groom at the George to put him into the stable."

The half-crown did not compensate Perth for his damaged clothes and excoriated skin. He looked ruefully at his garments, thinking how

much more important to him were the rents in his clothes than the cuts on his hands and knees. Nature would heal these in a few days; but, alas! Perth had no sister Leah now to mend the others. The roughened skin smarted, and the cuts ached, whilst Perth led the quivering, smoking horse to the inn stable.

The ostler received him with a grin.

"I always said that Mr. Sharpin would rue the day when he bought that nag. Tried to catch him, I suppose, and got dragged, by the look of your hands and knees; not but that Sally looked out of the window and told me something about it."

"May I wash off the blood and gravel in this pail?" said Perth.

"Yes, you may, if you empty and fill it again with clean water. There's a piece of soap, and you may wipe your hands on that rubber."

The cold water and the consequent cleanliness were pleasant to the boy, and putting his hand to his waistcoat pocket to be sure that the half-crown was safe, and had not fallen out when he stooped over the pail, he went with a light heart to buy his book.

When Mr. Reece saw him coming, he thought of a compromise, as he could not know that Perth had received any replenishment of pocket-money since the previous evening, when he had seen the longing looks directed to his counter by the youth as he passed the house.

"I have been thinking, as you seem so keen on this volume," he said, putting his large hand over it, "that you might pay me a shilling now, and a shilling two months hence."

This threw a new aspect on the affair; for Perth knew that he should want to eat up eighteen-pence out of the stout gentleman's half-crown, and the loan of the shilling, as he considered it, from the grocer, he could repay when he got the money for his clothes. He was more ready to accept of the accommodation, as he felt he could not walk about with triangular rents on his knees, and a large white space under one of his arms, which had been torn in his struggle with the runaway horse. So he thanked Mr. Reece, and paying down the half-crown, received eighteen-pence in return, which the grocer gave back grudgingly, seeing that his customer might have paid him at once in full. However, before he had made up his mind to fight for the immediate payment of the second shilling, Perth had placed the eighteen-pence in his pocket, and, clutching the book, had gone to fetch his grammar and lexicon before he settled himself in his favourite seat in the avenue.

We left Leah stitching away at her weary task at the window of her bedroom. No one entered this room but herself, and it was a very temple of neatness and quiet. There was a little keeping-

room, as the Essex folks call that part of the house where the family generally live; but sewing required, Leah knew, the most scrupulous cleanliness, and both Perth and her father would come in sometimes with shoes which showed contact with summer dust and winter mud. Should her work have fallen on ground subjected to such pollution, Leah would have been a wretched girl, for she prided herself that her hems and seams should be as pure-looking as if they had been part of the original woof, and subjected as such to all supplementary bleachings, which produce the dazzling effect in the original piece.

She occupied a small bed with white dimity curtains, which were seldom drawn, as the window was so obscured by climbing plants in the summer, that the light was by no means inconvenient, and during the winter months the rays of the sun were too pleasant to be excluded. She had her treasures, too—a Bible and Prayer-book of her own, a small framed engraving of Lord North's seat, and one of the village church belonging to their parish, in the churchyard of which her mother reposed. Leah remembered little of her mother but a dim vision of attenuation and suffering; but she knew the reverence in which her father held the memory of his departed wife, and Leah honoured her accordingly. She had one more book, "Pamela," then in the plenitude of its fame, and considered by our plain-

speaking ancestors as the most moral of the works of fiction, though no publisher of the present day would dare to reproduce its ponderous improprieties.

There are some natures which accumulate impurities, and some that repel them. Leah's was of the latter type; and though it was possible that some thought that Sir Edgar might marry beneath him, as Squire B—— had done, passed through her mind, her innocent fancy never dwelt on the preparatory scenes which led to the desired result.

In the meantime, whilst Leah exercised her womanly virtue by keeping her room and executing her task, Sir Edgar was repenting his last experiment, and longing to see the pretty needlewoman again. Miss Elliot he did not choose to marry, because he had an idea that he ought to fulfil the contract made by his dead father; besides, he was sure he might marry her if he pleased. "This other woman," he said to himself, "with her transparent artifices, her greediness, and her selfishness, is intolerable. If I cannot see my wood-nymph again, I shall bolt off the course before the *fête*-day. What pleasure can any rational creature feel in seeing those of the same species eating and drinking to repletion? It would be degrading enough to watch swine similarly occupied, if one were expected to feel pleasure at the exhibition."

A sudden thought flushed his cheek.

"By Jove! *she* will come to the *fête*, no doubt. I must be careful in speaking to her, or that great fellow, her brother, may give me as thorough a licking now as he did three years since;" and his right hand went up and caressed his ill-used nose involuntarily.

It still wanted some days to the feast, and he wearied to see Leah again. He had been so very respectful in his manner to her on that memorable occasion when she was crying in the billiard-room. He would have kissed her if he had followed his own wishes. He might as well have taken that opportunity, if he were to have no other. "How would she have taken it?" he wondered. He had never seen a girl seemingly so retiring and modest, and the thought that she might have been distressed consoled him for not having made the attempt.

After walking up and down the billiard-room restlessly, seeing in the whole of the heavy furniture only the chair in which Leah had sat in her brief stay at the Hall, he ordered his horse, and went to his bedroom, having arranged his dress with more care than he had ever exercised to captivate a high-born beauty in the park. His intention was to ride slowly through the forest paths, come out at the Chase, and then passing Leah's cottage, return to the Hall across the park.

Would the reader have a glimpse of this Adonis of 1800, as he came under some old cedar trees, a

bright bit of colour contrasted with their dull, platform branches of dark green, with brown, unreflecting barks? The sunshine of May illuminated the foliage around them, which was of the soft yellow of oak-leaves newly emancipated from their furry winter coverings of buds, and waving at every breath of the balmy air their tasselled blooms. At the back of Sir Edgar appeared a long vista, where the trees in their different tints were repeated and softened by distance, with one exception, which was a solitary Judas tree of the brightest lilac, every slender branch being so covered with bloom that the flowers seemed hung in air rather than supported on their proper stems. Sir Edgar's coat was of bright scarlet, his hair flowed over his shoulders, and was surmounted by a black beaver cocked-hat, trimmed with gold and adorned by a white feather. His open coat showed an embroidered waistcoat of white silk, over which flowed his lace necktie; but how shall we speak with profane lips of the matchless perfection of the garment which clothed the lower part of his person? We heard from the best authority that it arrived from London on the previous night, and that two valets, standing by a chair, held what the author, being a simple-minded person, dares to call a pair of leather breeches, into which Sir Edgar stepped, and was duly shaken, no other manner being possible of pulling them on. From the side of each knee fluttered fourteen ends of

green ribbon, whereby the leather was united, in the place of buttons; top-boots, the upper part being of the whitest leather, completed the dress.

As soon as he appeared in the distance the old dog, whose memory still lingered on past triumphs, and who scented the battle afar off, began to utter short, aggressive barks. Knowing that Gyp was not far off, Sir Edgar at a distance heard the sound, and observed a delicate figure in white lean out of the small window to see what had disturbed the old dog, who had become more crusty and irascible with added years. "She is there," he thought, and took his decision as to his line of action immediately. He rode slowly past, without turning his head towards the cottage, and, calling his dog, put his horse at a weak part of the fence, scorning the little gate through which he might have ridden, and disappeared over the park. He knew he should produce more effect by showing himself to Leah without seeming to know she was there, or appearing to seek her notice by a bow, or even a look.

The poor girl felt somehow injured and insulted, and shed a few tears without knowing why.

She could not tell what she had expected him to do. He might have looked towards the house surely; but wherefore? He had been kind and good-natured when she had been in trouble with those bold men and women servants at the Hall, yet there was no reason why he should ever think of

her again; and at that probability the tears streamed over her peach-downy cheeks.

"I shall never—never forget him," said she, "if I should live to be a hundred!"

Poor girl! Thus vows the heart of youth, not knowing how dim and colourless are the shadows of our past lives, and their joys and sorrows, after a lapse of fifty years, and how the actors seem like the phantoms in a troubled dream to the aged.

It was hard upon poor Leah that she should have captivated the fancy of a licentious young man, who had never denied himself, or been denied by fortune, any object on which he had set his mind.

There were women in London more beautiful, possibly, with their charms heightened by fashionable attire, with natures practised in refined allurements; but the untaught innocence, and the modesty of every look and gesture, combined with the strong emotion from which she suffered when Sir Edgar first saw her, made Leah an object of greater attraction to the libertine than any beauty he had ever before seen.

The constancy with which she stayed in her cottage, continuing her occupations, irritated Sir Edgar, who had been accustomed to the part of the pursued rather than of the pursuer.

"I really don't think the stupid girl cares whether or not she ever sees me again," he said to himself, and he registered a vow that she *should* care.

CHAPTER X.

"Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it."

Solomon's Song.

One of the strongest phases of love is that the victim to that untender passion is always anxious to speak of the object of it, even when there is little to be said, and to persons who must be necessarily indifferent to the subject.

As Sir Edgar could not ride past Leah's cottage that day a second time, he could not help introducing her into his next conversation with the two ladies.

"I think you had some work done by some village girl, madam," he said, addressing the governess. "May I ask how she did your bidding? Was her work tolerably neat?"

"Well enough," replied Miss Bruce. "She did not quite fit me round the waist."

"Ah! I've no doubt she had no conception of the refined delicacy of that beautiful circle:—

'Give me but what that ribbon bound,
Take all the rest the sun moves round,'"

he said gallantly, kissing the band which had fallen

off, as, fitting the action to the word, she had clasped her waist with her two spread hands, and unfastened the snap of the girdle by the pressure.

Miss Bruce tried to blush and look displeased, as Miss Elliot was present. "It was very provoking," she thought, "that Sir Edgar never said such pretty things when they were alone." She feared Mr. Elliot, though he troubled himself but little as to what was going on around him, would be obliged at last to ask Sir Edgar if he meant to insult Miss Elliot by his open advances to another lady, if he continued to say such distressing things, to which she could attach but little value, as they were never repeated under circumstances when they would have indicated some reality of feeling in the speaker.

Miss Elliot spoke at length, quietly, but with a rising flush which enhanced her beauty.

"I don't know whether you had any particular reason for making the inquiry, Sir Edgar, but the young girl to whom you allude is an excellent sempstress, and is very highly spoken of, as are her father and brother."

She felt herself insulted, but resolved to show no pique in her manner, which might indicate that she was heart-wounded by his preference for her governess. So soon as she could without showing ill temper, she meant to signify to her father her wish to break off an engagement which the gentleman seemed only to use as a pretext for insult.

Sir Edgar was pleased by the younger lady's praise.

"Thank you," he said. "I have some French cambric which I should like to have trimmed with lace for neckties. If Mistress Preston has fingers sufficiently delicate for such fine work, I shall be glad to employ her."

"I am sure, Sir Edgar, you need not give your cambric to a paid sempstress; *I* should be most happy to trim the kerchiefs for you," returned Miss Bruce.

"Alas, madam! do you think I would consent to occupy those delicate hands, or distress those speaking eyes, by any requirement of mine? Let those who are less fair remain at their daily tasks; 'we frolic whilst 'tis May!'"

"Sir Edgar, I never can tell how long your good intentions may last," said Miss Elliot, smiling. "Suppose you give me the cambric and the lace, and I will carry them myself to Leah Preston, and explain how you would like them to be made."

"Suppose we all go?" exclaimed Sir Edgar gaily.

"By all means!" agreed Miss Bruce; for she thought, "Miss Elliot will go into the cottage, and I shall have a stroll with Sir Edgar in the park in the meantime."

"Pardon me, if you two are going, I think I will leave you to convey the cambric, and Sir Edgar will be able to give his own directions."

"Oh! if the party is to be broken up, I have no desire to go, and I can send my valet with the work at any time."

To walk alone with a forward woman of whom he was heartily tired was too great an effort for the young man. Miss Bruce could not urge the scheme, as her pupil, who showed a strong determination to emancipate herself from feminine control, had refused to accompany her, for she lived in daily terror lest Miss Elliot should represent her conduct with regard to her affianced husband to Mr. Elliot.

In the meantime, Caleb Preston was heavy in heart for the absence of his son. Having, under the influence of violent anger, banished the youth till he should admit his fault, he yearned for his return with restless suffering, the pain being more acute in proportion to the Spartan reticence of his manner.

If he could have admitted his heart-ache to Leah, he would at least have had her sympathy; but he felt that he should thereby have lessened his dignity, and consequent influence on his remaining child.

He had been accustomed every morning to hear Perth's step on the stairs, just as the old clock struck five, and since the boy's absence he awoke at one o'clock, and remained awake, thinking of his son, pondering as to where his young head was resting, and irritated by a faint hope that he would return to breakfast that morning, in time for the prayers that preceded the meal.

Caleb had never been in the habit of going to Stoneham, and now his disinclination to do so was stronger than ever, lest he should have questions asked as to the absence of Perth, who usually transacted Caleb's business for him.

Had he gone, he might have heard and seen what would have melted his heart into unconditional forgiveness, and induced him to pardon Perth for his unnatural preference of the Latin and Greek grammars.

Whilst the father sat in his little room, pretending to read, but in reality watching with tremulous heart-beatings every sound of Dick Crozier's feet on the stone-paved path outside the window, as he came and went to minister to the necessities of the blind pony—a proceeding of which, on each occasion, the old dog expressed loud disapprobation—whilst Caleb allowed the food placed before him to remain scarcely tasted, because his heart yearned towards his absent son, and he longed for the sound of his voice and the sight of his comely head, the object of his solicitude was suffering bodily pangs for the want of the sustenance which his father's anxiety prevented his consuming.

He had but ninepence left to keep him alive for fifteen days, I have before stated. It seems to him he had never been so outrageously hungry in his previous life, simply because he had never known such continued privation, nor observed how much

he had really consumed in his father's house. He limited himself to half a penny roll daily, and for two days he ate only the proper share, but on the third morning, the vulture in his maw would not be appeased with the sacrifice of his resolution, and he swallowed the whole greedily.

The weather was unusually dry and bright, so that Perth could sit on the seat in the avenue, and study his Homer, forgetting for a time, in the living scenes represented by the poet of the confused voice of battle and garments rolled in blood, the gnawing pain in his stomach, and the sickness which accompanied it, which made the dim Greek characters weaker before him, from the faintness which arose from want of food.

One day a nurse, with one child in her arms, led another, who was eating a bun. The child, from caprice or repletion, flung it away, only partly consumed; a dog following smelt at it and refused it, and Perth, having waited to see if the nurse would return to pick it up, darted at it, overwhelmed by shame, and ate it eagerly.

If it were but the season for carrots or turnips, Perth thought he might help himself to a few without thinking it much of a sin; and he ran over in his mind all the fields sown with those vegetables in the neighbourhood of Stoneham; but, though the weather was now so genial, the earlier part of the spring had been backward, and he knew there were

none worth pulling. At length there came a day of soaking rain, and Perth was compelled to remain shut within his little room, irritated about one o'clock by the savoury smell of baked meat, of which his landlord was partaking with his family, which made the involuntary saliva rise to Perth's lips, and increased his faintness.

The division was but lath and plaster between the rooms, and he heard the woman of the house suggest whether, as that poor boy was kept in by the rain, he should not be asked to take a bit of dinner with them. Perth started up with a sudden hope, but sank down disappointed on hearing the ungracious reply of the husband, who told her that if she was going to feed every good-looking boy who lodged there, his pocket would not suffice to pay for her folly.

That day was a very dreary one, for the preparations for tea, accompanied by the odour of broiled bacon, brought on again the sick yearning for food.

He went out when at night the rain ceased, and purchased, just before the shops were shut, a small quantity of rice with his last three-halfpence. He did not mean to ask his laundress to boil this; it would have been an admission of his great need, for she would never credit that any human being could be content with so small a quantity of nutriment, divided into three portions: moreover, Perth imagined rightly that by swallowing the rice un-

cooked, the expansion of the grains in his stomach would relieve, in some degree, the gnawing sense of emptiness and pain.

In the meantime Perth grew hollow-eyed and stooping in his gait. He bent forward, partly to try to relieve the distress of his stomach, and partly from lack of strength to hold himself up. He had tried to extract a shilling in advance from the promised purchaser of his clothes; but the youth told him truly that he should not himself have a sixpence till the morning of the 15th, when he would pay him the whole. With this promise Perth was fain to rest content.

When the conversation with regard to the visit to Leah Preston had ceased, Miss Elliot, disappointed of her kind intentions towards the young needlewoman, determined to look out for some work, either for her father or herself, which might afford Leah employment. In the meanwhile she strolled to the gardens; for her father, having presented her with a recently-published work on ornamental horticulture, she was eager to exercise her newly-acquired accomplishment.

She was met, however, by difficulties which she did not anticipate, and which irritated her. Luke was unwilling to alter his old-fashioned ways, and though he knew but little of his art, his knowledge was greater than hers, and he could bring the results of his experience to negative all her little plans

about artificial moulds and budding roses, which she desired to experimentalise upon. Accordingly, when she saw him go off to his *elevens*, she called a little boy who was employed in weeding the borders, and desired him to fetch Perth Preston immediately, remembering how intelligently he had spoken to her on a former occasion.

The boy grinned, and put his hands to the back of his head, as if to rest it whilst he looked up in the young lady's face.

"I count I must go a good step to fetch *he*, miss."

"Where is he working, then—in the north plantation?"

"He ain't working here at all."

"Not working here?"

"Why, didn't you know? Mr. Luke turned him away 'cause he told the names of the flowers—Latin they were—what master didn't know himself."

"Where is he now, then?"

"I seed 'un last Sunday, when I went to my aunt's at Stoneham. He did look bad; they said he was 'most starved, they counted, for he didn't seem to have anything to eat. He lodge at my uncle's house."

Miss Elliot turned away sad at heart, full of pity for the youth, who seemed to have suffered so unjustly, and determined to make an effort to have Perth Preston reinstated in his former situation. She

called the boy, and desired him to tell Luke to come to her so soon as he had finished his luncheon in the summer-house near the acacia tree, and she seated herself there, growing more angry, as time went on, at her own wrongs and those of Perth Preston, and with the author of both, Gilbert Luke.

"Where is that boy"—the young lady chose to ignore his being a full-grown youth—"that boy —Preston I think you called him?"

"I can't rightly say, miss. He had finished his job. He was only took on for a job. I believe he fell out with his father, and Mr. Preston turned him out of doors. He was a young man that had a wonderful notion of himself: no one was good enough for him in his opinion."

"I wish him to be taken back again to work here. I choose it," said the young lady, usually so placid, with her eyes flashing fire.

"'Scuse me, miss, that must be as master pleases. You see, mum, that I can't have young folks put over me, that might be my son in years, for the matter of that, and if your papa pleases, I can leave his service; but I must be master over the young men in the grounds so long as I do stay."

Here was a state of affairs! The young lady had not anticipated such a result of her remonstrance. She walked away, saying she should speak to her father on the subject, with a firm step and her head well elevated, to give Luke the idea that she was

fully determined what course to adopt, whereas she was both perplexed and crest-fallen. She doubted very much her father's choosing to interfere between the old gardener and his underlings. Mr. Elliot loved his ease, and preferred being badly served and somewhat cheated, to the annoyance of having to look after his own affairs. Miss Elliot could imagine what he would say, should she apply to him:—No doubt Luke was right, and that the boy was impertinent. He must be a bad sort of fellow, or his own father would not have turned him out of doors. He, her father, could not interfere between old Luke and the people he chose to hire or to dismiss.

Before she proceeded further, she would get together some work and send for Leah Preston, to gather from her, if possible, the true cause of Perth's expulsion from home.

CHAPTER XI.

"O love! in such a wilderness as this,
Where transport and security entwine,
There is the empire of thy perfect bliss."

"You sit too long in the house, child, over that needlework," said Caleb Preston, observing the pale cheeks and heavy eyes of his darling.

"I *must* finish the lady's dresses, father," was the reply.

"Certainly you must finish them; but you must be in the open air more," replied Caleb Preston, seized with a sudden dread that the seeds of the disease which had deprived him of his wife might lurk in the veins of his daughter. "You should walk out an hour every day," he continued.

Leah was silent. She thought she could compromise the matter by taking her work with her into the forest, and sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree.

She had often sat there before. An acacia, having been uprooted in a winter tempest, had fallen over a cluster of wild cherry trees, and bowed them to the earth in its descent. Life still lingered in the acacia, and it had brought forth its spring foliage.

The cherry trees had bent, but not broken, in their neighbour's descent, and now made a close covert round the acacia's rugged trunk. A small expanse, unoccupied by timber, but surrounded by it, was covered by a blue carpet of the wild hyacinth, and the pendent branches of the elder rendered the air heavy with perfume. Wild parsley, in full white blossom, added its scent, and was varied in colour by the pink geranium. Here Perth had cleared away the obtrusive branches, so as to afford Leah a rustic seat, and here she had been accustomed to sit with her sewing or knitting, and sing her simple songs or evening hymns. The seat was at some distance from the paths cut through the forest for the equestrians; and if a thought of the horseman in scarlet passed through Leah's mind, she dismissed the idea, as she felt that, once in her leafy retreat, she should be invisible to any passer-by.

On the day following Sir Edgar's proposition to walk with the ladies to the cottage of Caleb Preston, he placed some cambric and lace in the capacious pocket of his walking suit of grey cloth trimmed with silver, and went out by a circuitous route he knew would lead him to the other end of the forest, which he must traverse before he reached Leah's cottage. He preferred walking, because he was determined this time to enter her house, and give her the commission himself—his inclination to see her having been increased by the care she took to

exclude herself. But she was betrayed on this occasion by her dumb companion. The old dog who had accompanied her, after having made strenuous efforts to possess himself of a portion of her work to repose on, had been at length compelled to rest on the hem of her gown, and on the soft turf under her feet.

He was exhausted with his exertions—exertions of which his mistress had been unconscious, preoccupied as she was with all the poetry of love and youth.

Dick Crozier's mother, for a consideration, received from the cook at the Hall the contents of the wash-tub for the sustenance of her pig. The sty was out of sight at the back of her house, and at the end of a fairly large garden; and, the contents of the pail having been cast into the trough, the old dog, to whom butcher's meat was a rarity, used to steal down, and, with utter disregard to the remonstrances of the pig, and to his grunted indignation, possess himself of various mutton and beef bones, which, when he had satisfied his hunger, he used to bury in the ground. When he had seen that his mistress was bound for the forest, he crept down to the trough and selected the bone of a leg of mutton, with which he trotted after her, with his tail depressed, and casting backward glances from the corners of his eyes, to see if he were pursued by any rival claimant, or dreading the vision of Mrs. Crozier

armed with a birch-broom. No such misfortune befell him, however; but his teeth were broken, and the bone being a weary weight, he was glad to lay it down before he reached Leah's seat, and having scraped away the leaves and moss by the side of the road, he deposited the prize in the hole he had made for it. Leah sat down and worked, glad that the attention she gave her stitches in some degree abstracted her mind from the thought of Sir Edgar. The dog on the hem of her dress kept one eye open, even when he slumbered, and one ear occasionally pricked up to listen to any passing footsteps, and the one only thought in his dog mind fixed on the buried bone.

He was now refreshed by rest, and he hesitated whether it would not be better to bring the bone into closer proximity to his young mistress; but his nose was somewhat excoriated by the aid it had given his paws, and at the point where his claws were set in his toes, the sheaths were tender by reason of his scraping, so he dozed away and tried to forget his anxious blessing.

Presently his dreams were troubled by a distant scent; he started up with a low growl, then rushed away with vociferous barkings. Leah was not alarmed till she heard the voice of another dog, and was aware, by unmistakable sounds, that her veteran was engaged in combat with one or more adversaries. Then she threw down her work, and rushed to the

scene of battle, for she knew that, however valiant her old favourite might be, his powers were failing—his teeth broken and incapable of much harm, and his back-bone stiffened by age. So when she saw the teeth of Gyp at the throat of her dog, whose utterance was reduced to choked sounds of suffocation, she knew of no better way of releasing him than to try and open his adversary's jaws, after the manner of Samson's dealings with the lion; but which attempt, as she lacked the strength to carry it out, was a failure.

Luckily for Bobtail's life, a more effectual ally was near in the person of Gyp's master, who called off the dog just as his jaws, having released the throat of Bobtail, had seized on Leah's arm.

She was much alarmed, though a vigorous blow on the head from the switch Sir Edgar carried sent the animal slinking to his master's heels, without daring again to dispute the possession of the mutton-bone, which he had disinterred, and thus made the original cause of this renewal of strife. Leah stood pale with pain, and trembling too much with bodily apprehension to be shy about the presence of her lover. Her mitten was torn, and the blood had sprung from several of the punctures made by Gyp's teeth in her arm. She turned away mechanically to go back to the seat where she had left her sewing, too much scared to remember her courtesy to Sir Edgar, and feeling sufficiently faint to be glad of a

resting-place. He followed her with much concern, and seated himself by her side. Drawing down the black mitten, he looked with pity on the bruised and bleeding arm.

"There is a stream close by," he said; "let me take you there and bathe the wound."

He wondered whether she had any apprehension independent of the present pain; and though he wished the punctures to be well saturated with water, he did not choose to suggest any reason for the proposition. Leah had no objection, excepting that she was giddy and sick, and would have preferred sitting still till she was better. She obeyed the suggestion, however, and Sir Edgar supported her to the bank, where she knelt and allowed the water to flow over her delicate arm.

As Sir Edgar saw how the interrupted stream sparkled against the submerged hand, and seemed to caress the intruder, he thought of the legend of fairy-land, where the purity of the person immersed is tested by the reception it meets in the immortal rivers.

She knelt on the brink of the stream, stooping her arm that the waters might flow over it, half concealed by tall meadow-sweet, and ferns with buds like crumpled horns. He was fearful that she might overbalance herself, and placed his arm round her waist.

He loved this innocent, simple country girl with

a tenderness which redeemed many of his vices. Had she been coarse in her person, with the buxom beauty of only a peasant, he could not have been attracted as he was; but not Miss Elliot, the descendant of a noble family, could be more graceful in her person, or more correct in her expressions: the intonation was perfect—the surest test of refinement. As he knelt by her side supporting her as she leaned over the water, his soft curling hair fell over her neck and swept her face. Looking down, he saw their heads in close proximity reflected in the margin of the smooth stream—a beautiful personification of youth and love. Her face seemed brightening into a smile as the ripple of the water disturbed the image, and Sir Edgar, emboldened by the fancied expression of amusement, drew her more closely towards him and kissed her cheek, which, hitherto pale with terror, now glowed with troubled pleasure.

Nothing was said for a few moments, for Leah rose up so soon as she could disembarrass herself from Sir Edgar's encircling arm. He bent over the wounded arm, and folding his handkerchief carefully round it, led her back to the seat.

The kiss given and received had troubled them both into silence. When Sir Edgar found his voice he began to talk hurriedly about cambric and lace, producing them from his pocket, and asking her doubtfully if she would make his neckties, having intended, when he left the Hall, to give her an

order in a lordly manner. Somehow the love passage between them had in his mind elevated the needle-woman into an equality with himself, and he could not bear the idea of offering her money for her work. She looked into his face with troubled eyes, seeking to understand his directions, but with a sense of happiness in her heart, which some of us may remember to have felt when the first conviction of being beloved dawned on the mind, but of which no pen can record the evanescent sweetness. His countenance seemed invested with a glorious light. The consciousness of the nobility of a pure affection gave dignity to the expression of his features. She tried to continue her work, but the material dropped on her knees, and whilst one hand, which she had raised to remove gently his arm from her waist, was there imprisoned by his more determined grasp, the other was clasped by his over the fallen folds of the cambric and lace.

Hours sped away in this eloquent and honeyed silence. The sunshine sparkled over the polished leaves of the pendent holly trees, as the wind swept them into alternate light and shadow. The small birds twittered, and the wood-pigeons cooed their songs of passionate and tender love. The stream murmured in the distance—all things spoke of enjoyment—all sentient creatures seemed to feel it, with one exception: Gyp, crouched at his master's feet, felt he had been unjustifiably interfered with in

reference to the disputed bone. Could any one have presented him at the moment with another of equal value, he would have disdained the compromise—unless, indeed, the stranger had showed a disposition to appropriate it, when he would have fought again on the new cause of war.

Bobtail had not ventured on another interment of his stolen goods. The necessary turning of his hind quarters on his antagonist in such an occupation, and the employment it would afford to his paws and nose, would have given Gyp an unfair advantage over him, he considered; and, on mature consideration, after he had sat crouched on the turf, with his fore-paws on the disputed blessing, for some time, with short, insulting yaps uttered at intervals, he set to work to devour it, judging his internals to be the safest place of concealment; so he crunched the periosteum of the knuckle, and sucked out the inward sweetness of marrow, with an enjoyment which drove poor Gyp to the verge of distraction, who testified his desire to partake of the dainty by long pendent streams of saliva from his moistened jaws.

Hesperus, that bringeth all good things, provided consolation for Gyp. The dinner-bell rang out a prolonged peal, for Miss Bruce had found out how long Sir Edgar had been absent, and, after surreptitious peeps into the stable to see if he had ridden or walked, had begun to be uneasy at his prolonged stay, she knew not where.

Sir Edgar had no desire to be detected in his stolen enjoyment of Leah's society, so he rose hurriedly, and whispering, "You will be here to-morrow," walked briskly away, leaving his companion with a flush on her cheeks, which told of a fearful joy and a happy trouble.

CHAPTER XII.

"There's a plague every morning with buckling shoes, gartering, combing, and powdering."

FARQUHAR.

LEAH, too, gathered up her occupation, and went home with light steps, glad that her father's absence in visiting a sick member of his congregation permitted her to bathe her face and smooth her hair, which was drawn off her face in loose tresses, and fastened slightly by pins at the top of her head. In the country, custom still retained, amongst females not asserting themselves to be ladies, the full petticoat, short sleeves, and tight bodice confining the ends of a clear muslin handkerchief, as the usual costume; and this, as it revealed the perfect proportions of the figure, was in reality far more becoming than the short waist and the tightly-gored skirt, even with its trailing train.

Leah Preston, however, decried the advantages given her by this old-fashioned attire, and longed for a dress as unbecoming as those worn by the young ladies at the Hall. As she was aware that such a metamorphosis of herself would never be permitted by

her father, she was compelled to limit her power of adornment to a rose in the interlacings of her bodice.

"Fine doings, Miss Leah!" said old Molly, when Leah entered the cottage. "We're getting up in the world, I think! There has been such a sweet young lady here after you; and she has left a bundle of muslin and sprigs—(I don't understand what they are for)—for you to sew on for her. She seemed troubled not to see you, and, when I knew not where you were, she wanted master. Says I, 'Miss, if I might be so bold, master knows no more about sprigs and flowers—only them as grows out-of-doors, and in them he is very clever—than the babe unborn.' She gave a kind of smile, and said she should like to see Mr. Preston for all that; and I said that most likely he was a-praying along with Mrs. Clark, as was sick, and I showed her the cottage and she went away. I don't know if she found him; but 'tis time for master to come in to tea."

Leah was more troubled than pleased at the supposed honour done her in Miss Elliot's visit. She fancied, with a conscience guilty for the first time, that it must have some reference to her meeting with Sir Edgar in the forest.

Far other thoughts occupied the young heiress of the Hall. She was disturbed at having been unconsciously the cause of Perth's dismissal from home, though she could not understand what umbrage Mr.

Preston could have taken against his son on account of Perth's dismissal from occupation at the Hall by the head gardener.

Rose Elliot had often heard her father describe his juvenile sufferings in the acquisition of Latin and Greek, and his firm conviction that no boy ever became a scholar who was not thoroughly flogged through all the parts of speech, from the articles to the interjections. Flogging was kept up in a lively manner at the conclusion of the last century, yet Mr. Elliot was of opinion that the birch was getting into dishonourable disuse, and that the boys of the then day were not so fundamentally grounded as they had been fifty years before.

"A son foredoomed his father's soul to cross"

by an overweening attachment to the dead languages was a phase of human nature which had never before presented itself to the young lady.

When she left home her intention had been to speak to Leah Preston, and learn as much as she could of the facts of the case from her.

Perth Preston, grown pale and thin from starvation, was, however, an image which admitted no delay, and she resolved to see the father himself, and, after representing his son's state, to urge him to recall the wanderer to his home.

Whilst youth and love held holiday in one place, an aged and lonely woman was passing away to the

unknown land, in the village where the old Hall stood. She had been a domestic servant there, but she had been dismissed for some misconduct, real or pretended, and now she was going where she would no longer require charity or fear human justice.

It was by the bedside of this woman that Mr. Preston was engaged in prayer when Rose Elliot sought an interview with him. A small knot of village children had gathered round the cottage-door in awe-struck silence, with their fingers in their mouths, for they had an idea that old Betty Clark was dying.

Miss Elliot had only heard that the woman was ill; she was accustomed to carry relief to the sick of the parish, and occasionally to join the clergyman in prayers uttered for the dying; consequently, when she heard the voice of Mr. Preston raised in supplication, she passed into the room through the half-opened door, and reverently stood by the side of the bed.

Death, which is often beautiful in childhood and early youth, and grand in manhood and middle life, is almost always terrible to the sight in age.

Betty Clark was no exception to the lot of humanity; her eyes seemed fixed in the upward glare, and she appeared to be holding converse with individuals in the invisible world, of which she would soon form a part.

"O Thou who seest and orderest all things in

heaven and earth, look down on this miserable woman, weary with the contest between death and life! Give rest to her labouring frame—give rest to her trembling soul, now fearful to seek Thy presence. Grant that she may in no way be ashamed when her moral deeds are brought to light; that no unrepented sins may give the unclean spirits power to bear her to their torments. Pardon her offences—comfort her weary body—spare her a little from these contentions of the flesh, that she may recover her strength, and raise her heart to Thee in prayer before she goes hence and is no more seen."

"I cannot die; I dare not!" said the woman, scarcely articulate from the parching of her lips, and speaking now after having been considered speechless many hours.

"Woman," said Mr. Preston, "if thou hast any secret sin unrepented of, seize on the short time that yet is left to thee, and make thy peace with God, and restitution, if thou hast wronged any one, to thy neighbour."

The sounds seemed to rouse the woman to the renewal of some of her waning faculties. She turned her eyes, and seeing Rose Elliot standing in the narrow beam of light which darted through the upper part of a high window, with her hair flowing over her shoulders, without a hat (which she had taken off in a feeling of respect to the prayers),

dressed in white, without ornament, she gave a faint cry, and said—

"Is it an angel? Oh, save me!"

Full of divine pity, and with a heart that yearned to grant the impossible boon, Rose bent over the bed, and took the dying woman's hand.

"I am Rose Elliot," she said.

"Rose Elliot! Miss Elliot! What have you come about?" the woman cried suspiciously. "Did they say I took anything?"

"No; no one said you took anything," said Rose soothingly.

"Woman! if thou hast any sin unconfessed on thy conscience, make restitution whilst it is yet day, lest the death of thy body be but the forerunner of the death of thy soul, from which there is no release, but the wrath of God abideth on it for ever."

A terrible convulsion distorted the dying woman, and Rose Elliot turned away, whilst Mr. Preston strove to still the agitated muscles of her limbs. When the violence of the fit was past, and the eyes regained their speculation, speech had left her; but she pointed to a small oak box which stood under her Bible on the table. Mr. Preston brought it to the bedside, and she pointed that it should be given to Rose. When Miss Elliot had taken it in her own hands, the woman nodded her head; and Rose whispered that it was an old box her grandfather had used to keep important letters in, but it had not been

seen since his death till now. The purloining of this had probably been the sin which had disturbed the last moments of Betty Clark, for she turned her face to the wall, and slumbered away the last half-hour of her life.

They waited in silence till the last breath was departed, and then the grave minister rose, and accompanied Miss Elliot into the evening sunshine.

"If you will allow me, I will carry the poor creature's legacy to you, Miss Elliot, to the Hall."

"Thank you; I shall be glad to say a few words to you," said Rose; and then she stopped, feeling awkward about beginning the subject.

Caleb Preston was not gifted with any of the natural or acquired graces of society. If the young lady had anything to say, she would say it in due time, no doubt; and in the meanwhile, he was meditating how he could turn the scene he had just witnessed to account in the delivery of his next Sunday's discourse.

Rose stole a glance towards his spare, rigid outline, as it stood out against the grey sky, and fancied she had never seen any countenance so unbending.

She began at length in desperation, for they were passing the first trees of the long avenue which led to the Hall, and she thought she should be unable to say all that she desired to enforce on him before they reached the house. To ask the Dissenting

minister to come in would have been an act which might have ruffled the well-powdered wig which covered the head of her proud father.

"Mr. Preston—pardon me if I give you pain in what I am going to inquire, but—you have a son who was employed by my father's gardener, and who was dismissed by him for a trifling fault, or for no fault at all; in fact, because he knew more than his temporary master. As the questions asked by Miss Bruce, my governess, and myself, were the primary cause of his dismissal, I feel much disturbed by the punishment of which we have been the unwitting cause. Where is your son now?" she said at length boldly; "and is it true you turned him from your door?"

"Young lady," said Caleb drily, "I have yet to learn by what right you interrogate me as to what passes within the sanctuary of my home; but I am willing to believe that you are kindly intentioned in this matter. My son was cast out from amongst my household because he was not of us. There was a time," he continued—for Caleb Preston was not free from the temptation to speak of his own experiences —"when I was myself caught in the snare of carnal knowledge. My heart was lifted up, and I said, 'Who is like unto me in wisdom and understanding?' I drank deep of the waters of affliction. It was told to me from the invisible world, by one whose infinite love brought her to me in the visions

of the night, that I was set apart to work God's will, and preach His word; and I came, not in excellency of speech nor of man's wisdom, for I desired to know only one Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I had loved to believe Plato inspired, and Socrates half divine. Now I sat at *His* feet only, where the Magdalen wept and worshipped, and said, 'His are the words of eternal life.' Then I took the pernicious books of Greek and Roman lore, and hid them in a deep chest. The old man was not so crucified in me that I could endure to burn them, as they should have been burnt. For is it not said, 'Many of them which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them?' (Acts xix. 19.) I put them away. I hid them for their beauty, as the housewife hides the poisoned sugar run into enticing forms and gaudily coloured, of which she dares not let her children partake, but which she grudges to destroy. I had forbidden my son to continue his study of the Latin language, which, when in the bonds of iniquity, I had begun to teach him. In an evil hour he robbed me of my books. He has studied for years by himself. His deceit and dishonesty have half broken my heart. I said, 'Bring back the goods which are not thine own. Confess that thou hast sinned, and be forgiven.' He answered not, but went out—even as he went out, the arch-traitor who betrayed his Saviour."

"Stop!" said Rose. "Let me understand. What did your son steal?"

"Four books—two grammars and two dictionaries," replied Caleb.

"Gracious heaven!" said the young lady, "did you turn your son out of doors because he stole elementary books for the purpose of learning out of them?"

"Swear not," said Caleb impressively, "by heaven, for it is God's throne."

"Never mind the swearing, Mr. Preston. 'Tis enough to make a saint swear to think that you should turn a fine young man out of doors because he did of his own good-will what my papa tells me all the boys at public schools—about two thousand, allowing each school five hundred—are flogged every day of their lives to make them do."

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil," said Mr. Preston.

"Which multitude do you mean—the masters who flog, or the boys who won't learn? According to your idea, those blessed boys must all be martyrs to their religious feelings, I suppose?"

The young lady was losing her temper, and Caleb Preston, though she spoke too rapidly for him to follow her meaning, was conscious of the irony of her tone, and flushed slightly. She was near the Hall-door now, and flung a Parthian dart as she took the oak chest from his hands, and entered the house.

"Well, Mr. Preston, you may think yourself a good man, and inspired by God. I do not believe God inspired you to turn your son out of doors to starve—yes, sir, to starve! He was seen, by one who told me, pale and shrunken and feeble for want of bread—bread, sir! bread! Now go home, and eat your supper, and say your prayers, and believe you have done rightly, if you can!"

Caleb Preston stood petrified as the folds of her white dress fluttered round the pillar, and then were lost to view as the massive door closed on her receding figure. His lips formed one word—"Where?" but the sound was unheard. He would have liked to knock at the door, peal the bell, and compel the young lady to answer him by urgent entreaties; but Caleb Preston knew how separated he was from persons in her rank of life. He had not served Lord North for nothing.

Everything near him marked the difference of position between him and the fair young creature he reverenced and loved for the sympathy she had shown for the son whom his wrath had driven from him. Evening was closing over the landscape—evening, more dreary from a gathering thunder-storm which shrouded the western sky in purple gloom; but, as he passed the window of the Hall, he saw the lighted dining-room, the rich folds of crimson damask curtains, the glitter of the massive

silver plate, and glimpses, half revealed, of valuable paintings by Snyders and Hondikooter, which his familiarity with the picture-gallery of Lord North had taught him to appreciate. This impression on his mind was felt, not thought about. He had no claim for sympathy there. Miss Elliot had given hers to the victim of his harsh notions of virtue. He walked away swiftly, possessed by a sudden dread lest any of the liveried servants should see him lingering, and ask him why he was there. The thunder muttered in the distance, and increased the feeling of depression from which Caleb Preston was suffering. He was hastening to his home, and hoped to reach it before the storm came on in increasing violence. But where was Perth, whom he had by his rigour deprived of a home? Pale, ill, starved for want of bread, Miss Elliot had stated him to be, and now perhaps wandering on some lonely hill-side exposed to all the turmoil of the elements. "But," he repeated to himself, "he might have returned and owned his fault and been forgiven. He is obstinate, contumacious. He deceived me;" and he walked on more determinedly, and with a firmer step. Then he began to consider that Perth might have returned had he chosen to do so.

Yet, notwithstanding this, he thought he would find out from Leah, if he could without showing too much eagerness, whether she had heard or seen anything of her brother since he had left home. He

quickened his steps, for the tempest increased in violence, his path being sometimes illuminated by the blue blaze of the lightning, and at length sheets of water seemed driven against him from the over-charged clouds. He walked on streaming with wet, his hat pressed over his forehead to shield his eyes from the lightning, when a slight form rushed up and clung to him with a cry of "Father!"

"Leah, my child!" he said, pressing her to his heart with a gush of love, "what madness to come out on such a night!"

"Oh, father, I thought the lightning might kill you! It has riven the old walnut tree in the Chase, and you were so late; and I went to Mrs. Clark's house, but she was dead. Then I wandered about, and presently all the park was lighted up for an instant, as if the last day had come, and I saw a dark figure under the trees, and felt I must get close to you. Oh, father! get home fast. You are so wet," she continued, forgetting the streams of rain which fell on her, and soaked the muslin kerchief which covered her bosom.

"I have one child still," murmured Caleb Preston, as he pressed her arm closely to his side as they struggled on together. "She will never be aught but a comfort to her old father."

Thus prophesied one who had never been tempted from the path of reason and rectitude by any strong impulse of the passions or the affections.

We are happy frequently on insecure grounds. We are unconscious that the small pinnacle on which we stand has reached its elevation by the combustibles hid in its depths.

Leah's terror for her father had derived some of its intensity from the idea that, having done wrong in remaining so many hours with Sir Edgar, she might be punished by Heaven in the person of her natural protector. Moreover, her emotions were all alert from the newly-awakened sensibilities of her nature.

Caleb knew nothing of this when he blessed and dismissed her for the night, that she might get rid of her saturated clothes. At the door he retained her hand for an instant.

"Leah, have you heard aught of Perth? Do you know where he is gone?"

"No, father," and a look of pain came across her sweet face; "I do not know, and I have heard nothing. I put some food in the stable the first morning, but he never came back, and the old pony ate the bread."

Caleb turned away. He had lowered his dignity in inquiring after the runagate, and had received no satisfaction for the sacrifice. He would go over to Stoneham the next day, however. Molly had told him that "the sugar and salt butter was getting low, and that there was scarcely a sheet of wrapping paper left in the drawer. When the feast-day

comes, them servants will be a-running down here every half-hour for things the cook has forgot to order from Stoneham."

Perth had been in the habit of transacting most of his father's business, and Mr. Preston sighed to think how much he had been saved in his transactions by his son's activity and acuteness. "I may hear something of him," he thought, "at Stoneham. Very likely what Miss Elliot said may not be true; or, at any rate, it may have been exaggerated;" and the father laid his anxious head on his pillow, and tried to sleep away some of his anxieties.

In these efforts he was unsuccessful, for the pouring rain, and the previous depression of his spirits, which had predisposed him to malign influences in the atmosphere, united to give him a feverish attack, which began with more than the usual amount of shivering, and which continued sufficiently long to make Caleb Preston fear that he was about to be seriously ill. Then came the hot hands and restless head, as fever succeeded, and by morning an acute pain in one ankle and knee betokened an attack of rheumatism, which would make his journey to Stoneham impossible. At the dawn he summoned old Molly, and requested her to call Dick Crozier before he went to his work, and ask him to obtain permission from the farmer for whom he worked to go to Stoneham and fetch the stores required for the shop.

So, after having first lighted the kitchen fire to heat water for fomentations for her master's knee, Molly proceeded to Mrs. Crozier's cottage, gave the message to Dick, and desired him, if he were permitted to go, to come to Mr. Preston for orders.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and a touch of joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off our daily toils,
They do divide our being."

LEAH, in the meantime, slept, and recalled in sleep the circumstances of the past day.

"Go then, and dream o'er those joys in thy slumber,
Hours so sweet again ne'er shalt thou number,"

that poet has said who was best entitled to record how evanescent is the enchantment of love's young dream.

But the halo round her lover still glowed in Leah's sleeping hours. Again she was seated by his side in the forest retreat. She felt her hands imprisoned by his. She felt her cheeks flushing under the passionate fervour of his dark eyes. Presently the sunshine was gone; the tempest swept along the groaning branches; there was the vivid flashing of the lightning, and a riven tree came down with a crash on the stricken form of her lover. Leah started up with a cry of agony, and heard the thunder rolling away in the distance, and was filled

with thankfulness that it was a dream. But her terror and anxiety even in sleep had shown her how very dear Sir Edgar had become to her. She got up and looked out, partly to dispel the horrors of her sleep, partly to try to judge if the weather on the following day would be fair.

"You will be here to-morrow," she repeated to herself with a loving smile. She delighted to dwell on the remembrance of his eager, impassioned glance as he spoke the words, and tried unconsciously to imitate the tones of his voice.

She was hopeful about the brightness of the following day, and laid her flushed cheek on her pillow again with the consciousness that she was beloved.

After Mr. Preston had had his knee duly fomented he wrote his orders for Dick Crozier to execute, and placed them by his bedside. He had desired that the youth might come and speak to him before he went; for, without having any settled intention, he fancied that something might arise to turn the conversation to Perth, and it might end by Caleb's asking Crozier to inquire if he could hear anything of his son at Stoneham.

In the meantime the pain in his knee abated under the warm fomentations, and the result of his weary, restless night was that Dick found the pastor in a quiet sleep, from which he was careful not to disturb him; and, taking the notes from the chair by

the side of the bed, he went down softly, with shoeless feet, and knowing the different shops where Mr. Preston dealt, resolved to offer the notes to the owners in succession till every saddle was put on the right horse, as he fittingly observed—Dick Crozier not being blessed by "larning," as he termed reading and writing.

He lingered for a moment after harnessing into the cart the blind pony, in the hope that Leah might come down and give him some commission; but his delay only brought a sharp rebuke from old Molly, who wondered how ever the ladies and gentlemen at the Hall were to get their luncheons cooked properly without a bit of lard to be had in the village—and anybody might tell that the pastry would be like flint when there was nothing but butter in it, and the weather so hot and all.

"Is there nothing more wanted, Mrs. Molly? Nothing for youself—nothing for Miss Leah?"

"No, no; be off with you. Look how the flies are tormenting that poor brute while you are gabbling away here;" and, with one more stealthy look at Leah's window, Dick Crozier was compelled to depart.

Leah was greatly disturbed by the news that greeted her, on getting up, of her father's attack. Had he been in any danger, she thought she could have given up the hope of seeing Sir Edgar willingly, but she dreaded lest the attendance her

father would require might interfere with her appointment, without any great necessity for the sacrifice.

But it was not thus; our griefs seldom come from the point at which we watch for them. They dart round corners unexpectedly, and are all the more unbearable from the circumstance that they strike us unprepared for the sudden shock.

Mr. Preston was tenderly nursed by Molly and by his daughter during the morning hours, and feeling better, he got up and sat in his room, and desired Leah to bring his pen and ink and note-book, that he might prepare his sermon for the following Sunday, and not to let him be disturbed. He was sorry not to have seen Crozier; but his knee was better, and on the following day he hoped, if the blind pony was not too much exhausted by his load, to drive him again to Stoneham, and learn some news of his truant.

Leah, released from a great anxiety, hurried to the seat in the forest. It was later than on the previous day, and she had a fluttered hope that Sir Edgar might be already there; but she was disappointed. She sat down and began her labours rather crest-fallen, and with all her force of comprehension settled in her organs of hearing. How irritating was the sound of the sweeping branches of the forest trees as they were swayed by the breeze! Bobtail sat at her feet. She looked to the old dog for aid,

for she knew that his more acute sense would detect the advent of his enemy sooner than her blinder perception would recognise the footsteps of him she loved. But Bobtail had selected a spot on the turf where the sunshine seemed most constant and least broken by intervening shadows, and there the venerable and experienced animal reposed, and showed neither by quiver of eyelid nor elevation of ear that there was any mischief abroad that concerned him.

But Bobtail had to remove himself quietly from the spot on the turf, which the warmth of his body had made quite comfortable to himself, and follow the warm sun spot to a more distant locality, before any stranger came to disturb the too-peaceful glade. Morning passed to afternoon, and Sir Edgar had not come; and Leah, who, fancying a whisper of love in every whisper of the light breeze amongst the branches, had tacitly called Bobtail a stupid old dog not to announce her lover's approach by a furious barking, leaned her neglected head on the polished stem of the beech tree, which covered the encircled ground like a gigantic umbrella, and allowed the tears to trickle down her delicate cheeks unnoticed.

Oh, how happy she had been on the previous day! Should she ever be so happy again? "Never!" she said aloud, in her sorrow, and a faint echo amongst the old trees replied, "Never!"

She sat with downcast eyes, which fell on old Bobtail. He was curled round, indulging in a deli-

cious dream of the contents of Mrs. Crozier's sow's-trough, no doubt. "Dogs dream of bones," Pope has assured us; but dreams of bones are as illusory as other visions, and so Bobtail found. His mistress saw one ear raised slowly, as unwilling to be disturbed from that delightful reverie, where hope and memory made a mingled joy; then both ears pricked up, the eyes opened. Leah held her breath with re-awakened expectation. "If it is not Sir Edgar now I shall break my heart," she thought, but she dared not look up nor speak. Bobtail rushed forward with a sharp bark and bristled hair, and Sir Edgar sprang over him and Gyp, who had drawn up ready for battle inconveniently just in the path, and caught Leah to his breast, dearer than ever for the tears on her cheeks, which he well imagined had been shed for his absence—dearer for the small impediments which had delayed his footsteps from her side. It was a pleasure to speak of them to her, and to describe how he had surmounted them.

Miss Bruce had been very inquisitive, he told her, as to how his previous morning had been spent.

"What did you say?" said Leah, opening her blue eyelids to their widest extent, with anxiety.

"I told her that I had walked away into the forest, and finding the weather hot, and the sense of loneliness which haunts a bachelor very cheerless, I had seated myself on the trunk of a fallen tree,

and had had the most delicious dreams I ever experienced in my life, from which I had been roused only by the sound of the dinner-bell, which brought me back to the Hall."

"Oh! but you should not have said what was not true, for I do not think you slept at all."

"Should you have preferred my telling the truth?" said Sir Edgar, smiling.

"No," replied Leah, blushing; "but I am afraid it must be very wrong, as I do not wish you to tell any one of it."

"Wrong or not, Leah, it is happiness too great for me to give up, unless you insist upon it."

Then, finding her silent, he told how, on seeing him leave the breakfast-table, Miss Bruce had challenged him to meet her in half an hour's time in the Hall to have a game of battledore and shuttlecock. He could scarcely refuse, and flattered himself that she would soon be too tired to wish to prolong the play. In pity to the lady, and in respect to Leah's innocence, he did not tell her how attractive to the senses she had made her attire of loose, soft muslin; nor how, with seemingly blind eagerness and arm raised with the battledore, and head thrown back to watch the flying shuttlecock, she flung herself repeatedly in Sir Edgar's arms as he was similarly occupied. On these occasions an embrace was inevitable, from which the lady had freed herself with simulated confusion and a murmured remon-

strance of "Oh, Sir Edgar! you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

On this phrase being repeated the second time, Sir Edgar wickedly asked if they should not give up playing; on which Miss Bruce had replied that it was a pity not to keep up as many as a hundred before they left off. It was a long time, by Miss Bruce's computation, before the players reached a hundred, and when that was accomplished, she declared she was so exhausted that she must request Sir Edgar to procure her some iced strawberries.

He rang the bell, but there were none nearer than the garden; and when he said he would walk down thither, she declared she would accompany him, as the coolness of the lime avenue would be so refreshing after their exertions that she could not really permit him to enjoy it alone. They went together, therefore, and he picked her so many that he wondered how many more it would take to satisfy her. At length the luncheon-bell sounded, and they returned to the house; and while the lady was compelled to go to her room to get rid of red stains on her lips and her fingers, Sir Edgar had made polite excuses to Miss Elliot for not attending her at luncheon, and had hastened away through the forest to Leah before his tormentor could pursue him a second time.

"And this tiresome creature detained me so long from my darling!" he continued at the conclusion

of the account of his detention, "and I am all the more provoked because I do not think I shall be able to come to-morrow till quite late—perhaps not till dark."

Leah looked up piteously in his face, and her lips formed the faint sound "Why?"

"I am deputed by Mr. Elliot to meet a guest of his at Stoneham in the middle of the day."

"Oh!" said Leah, relieved, for she had thought some female influence might interfere with his visit to her. "And then," she continued, "will he ride, or do you fetch him in the carriage?" She did not care how he came, but felt as if she must make some remark to show that she was not too much disappointed at the prospect of not meeting Sir Edgar next day.

"It is not a *he* at all," he said, smiling, with a little consciousness, however, that he had wilfully led her into the mistake. "It is a young lady, a friend and cousin of Miss Elliot, Lady Barbara Westeura;" and he felt uncomfortable while he told Leah of her coming, as if he were aware that he was introducing an element of discord into the heavenly harmony which had reigned between them.

Leah's sweet face fell. "Are you acquainted with the lady?" she said.

"Yes, I know her pretty well," replied Sir Edgar, and for a man of the world, his admission was almost awkward; but, worldling as he was, there were some

mortifying recollections connected with Lady Barbara which altered the tone of his voice when speaking of her.

Leah, with the quick intuition of love, felt there was a mystery, and a painful one. She had not sufficient self-command to change the subject which she perceived perplexed her lover. She felt how wretched she should be so soon as she was alone in the wild surmises she should make as to his relation with that titled lady.

"Was she pleasant? Did you like her?"

"She is very agreeable when she chooses, and sometimes I liked, sometimes—and more frequently—I disliked her."

Leah breathed with less constraint,—the lover spoke truthfully. It was so difficult to lie to Leah. He fancied that her mind was like the fabled glass of Venice, which would detect any poison poured into it.

"Is she good-looking?" And of this feminine question, which she had longed to ask at first, she listened breathlessly to the answer.

"She is not regularly handsome, but is considered by some people very attractive. She has been a spoilt child all her days, being the only heir to her father's immense wealth, and is, I believe, rather inconsiderate of the feelings of others, having never had to consult any but her own inclinations."

Leah was almost satisfied, and smiled in her lover's

face, and they were very happy together for some time, till Leah remembered that it was time to return home and see if her father wanted anything.

"Could you not go for a little time and return to me?" said Sir Edgar anxiously. "You perceive that I cannot be certain of seeing you to-morrow."

Leah hesitated. "If he should give me anything to do for him I could not return immediately, and I should be so grieved to keep you waiting."

"Then stay with me now," said the reckless lover; but Leah withdrew herself gently from his encircling arm, for the thought of Mr. Preston troubled her.

"May I tell my father," she suggested timidly, "that I have met you once, twice, thrice before? I should be easier if he knew how happy I am in your love."

"What simplicity!" thought Sir Edgar. "My child," he replied aloud, "do you think Mr. Preston would permit our meetings?"

"I think he would," replied Leah, "if he knew how good, how noble, and how generous you are!" and she smiled in her lover's face with perfect confidence in the perfections with which her imagination had invested him.

When Sir Edgar had first been attracted by Leah's beauty and simplicity, he had meant only to amuse himself in an idle summer in a transient connection with a lovely girl, but some halo of generous emotion still lingered in the breast of this youth, who had

not yet attained his majority, and he had found himself engrossed by the reciprocity of a true affection where he had intended only to reap the fruits of one that was simulated. This feeling had shown itself in the respectful consideration with which he treated his innocent companion, and which, as it created no alarm in her bosom, had given her the conviction that *he* could have no objection to her father's cognizance of their mutual love, though *she* must feel guilty that their acquaintance had not been already confided to him. It was the concealment she was disturbed by, not that she felt there could be anything disgraceful in the fact of which her father had been kept in ignorance. Sir Edgar had told her that he loved her with beautiful and repeated iteration; and had not her father thus loved her departed mother, and would not her Edgar cherish her living and mourn her dead, as did the pastor the memory of his wife?

Sir Edgar did not see the matter in the same light. He loved the beautiful sempstress, but to take her by the hand and lead her to her father's presence, and request permission to become the son-in-law to the man who kept a little chandler's and general shop, was a step with regard to which he felt some not unnatural hesitation. Could Leah have seen what was passing in his mind, she, cognizant of the hesitation, would have judged him to be

utterly base, for she could not have felt his perplexities, nor understood his position.

In this she would have been uncharitable.

"To gently scan their brother man,"

is not the custom of the young who have not seen enough of society to be able to appreciate its cramping customs, which incapacitate those under its influence from walking easily in the paths they would like to tread, as completely as the Chinese lady is crippled by pressure brought to bear on her feet from the earliest infancy.

Sir Edgar temporised, and then took a determined position.

"My child," he said, "I cannot go to Mr. Preston and tell him of our love at present, as I should desire to do. You must understand that I am not yet of age, and if I married against the consent of a great man in London, called the Lord Chancellor, I should be separated from you and put into prison."

Leah clung closer to Sir Edgar's arm. She had never seen the inside of a prison, but her memory recalled the black hole into which drunken and refractory men were sometimes thrust before they were brought before the magistrates on the following morning, and the notion that her beautiful Sir Edgar should be subjected to such treatment filled her with horror.

"When I am of age, my sweet one, I shall be

my own master, and can then do that justice to your merits which they so well deserve. My Leah's grace and virtue would adorn any rank of life."

Sir Edgar flattered himself that in talking these generalities he had not committed himself. It was a kind of temporising with his conscience; yet he knew that his intention was to lead Leah into the conviction that he would marry her so soon as he became of age, whilst he took credit to himself that he had not entangled his honour by any promise.

Leah was not so well satisfied as she would have been had Sir Edgar said in a few words, "When I am of age I will marry you in spite of every one." She had sad recollections of having set her heart ten years before on the beauties of a waxen baby in one of the shops at Stoneham, and of crying for its possession, and of the mysterious comfort Molly had striven to impart by informing her that she should have the doll "some day never come time." She had striven to comfort herself by the half-understood predictions of the sibyl, taking the first part of the sentence that she should have it. At length, some more fortunate and wealthier little girl appropriated the beautiful wax baby, and Leah was compelled to be content with a penny doll, of which the eyes squinted like those on the countenances of court cards, and whose head was covered with a small heap of tow fastened on by a Siseraan nail. No similar horrors are prepared for children in the

present day. Was this past fact to be prophetic of the future to Leah?

She was very sweet and gentle, but discouraged.

"I do not think I can go on meeting you, Sir Edgar," she said, "without my father's knowledge."

His first feeling was one of impatience.

"Then you cannot care much for our interviews," he replied. But, touched by the sorrow brimming in her eyes, he went on to say—"Do what will make you happiest, my angel. I would not earn my hours of enjoyment at the price of your peace of mind. Act as you think best, and I will abide the consequences."

"After all," he thought, "if I find I cannot be happy without her, I can always marry her when I please. A very imprudent match, no doubt; but a man is surely the best judge of his own happiness in such matters."

In this Sir Edgar reasoned like other unwise persons. People are the best judges of the portion of their lives immediately before them, in their own opinion; but they, entangled by the obstacles and tempted by the sweet flowers in their path, cannot judge for themselves as do the elder and more dispassionate travellers, who have reached by age a higher circumspection. *They* see that the flowers will have faded when they have borne fruit, and that a life, to be judged of, must be judged by the whole, and not by a small portion of it.

Sir Edgar's consolation was unconsciously a selfish one. *He* could claim Leah as his wife or not, as he felt disposed; but *she* must watch and wait, and perhaps feel, at the close of a wasted life, that her love had been unvalued, and her devotion given in vain.

He thought he had been very noble and generous in giving her permission to deprive him of the pleasure of meeting her, by informing her father of their interviews.

He was not. He reasoned thus:—"If she loves me, the dread of not seeing me will be greater than her sense of duty to her father; but she does love me, and will come as usual to our trysting-place."

"How do you decide?" he said to Leah at length.

"I cannot tell yet," she replied with a choked utterance.

"Then good-bye, my sweet one," he said. "To-morrow I shall be unable to come to the forest by daylight. I could be there at eleven o'clock at night."

"No, I could not meet you then," she replied.

"In that case, I must hope for a favourable opportunity on Wednesday. On Thursday is the village feast: shall you be there?"

"I fear not," replied Leah with a faltering voice.

"Do come if you can, for I *must* attend it," said Sir Edgar; and, whistling to Gyp, he strode away

through the rustling branches, crunching the bluebells and arums under the heels of his boots.

Though Leah had been content to leave her interviews with Edgar concealed from her father when she was full of the first triumphant sense of being beloved, yet now that, she scarcely knew why, her confidence was abated, she wished to have the support of her father's affection.

No doubt she had been wrong in concealing the first interview, and that had made a revelation of the second more difficult.

She felt very depressed. She was not to see Sir Edgar to-morrow. If she confessed her fault to her father to-day, should she ever be permitted to see him again?

She shrank from that conviction. Then, with the indecision of a feeble mind, she determined "to see how things went"—namely, to be guided by circumstances. These were not propitious to her confession.

"I'm glad you've come in, miss. Master seems very touchy."

"Is he worse, Molly?"

"Can't say, miss. He've got that grey-white look about his face that he have when things go wrong with him. I believe 'tis all along with that idle fellow, Dick Crozier. Something about money."

"Only about money!—not about Perth?" cried the girl, with a fresh anxiety that deadened for the

moment the remembrance of her old grief, and with that ignorant disregard of money troubles which those feel who have never experienced them.

She must face it, whatever it was, she thought, and she went slowly up into his room. He looked up as she entered, with a feeble attempt at a smile on his worn features, that died away like a gleam of wintry sunshine. She shook up his pillows, and asked whether he had finished the notes for his sermon, but he scarcely responded. She dared not inquire what had grieved him so deeply. There were no habits of confidence between parents and children in those days, unless indeed amongst rare exceptions. She went on with her sewing by his side till it was time to pour out his rosemary tea. Towards evening the pain came back in his knee, and he was glad to return to the rest of his bed.

"Perhaps I may sleep," he said, "if I am left alone."

And Leah went down, and sat outside the door, to catch the last gleams of waning light; for her love-talk had considerably interfered with the progress of Miss Bruce's dresses, and she wished to make up for lost time, and to have an excuse for beginning Sir Edgar's neckties.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Fain would I sing what transports storm'd his soul,
How the red current throbb'd his veins along,
When like Pelides, bold beyond control,
Without art graceful, without effort strong,
Homer raised high to heaven the loud impetuous song."

BEATTIE.

LEAH had scarcely sat there five minutes before Dick Crozier lounged up to the gate.

"Miss Leah," said he, "I wouldn't have done it for all the world if I had knowed it, for your brother and me was always good friends. I could not tell I was going to put my foot on a cracker, and get my face and eyes nigh put out."

"What is my father's trouble, Richard?" said Leah anxiously.

"Well, miss, he's angered agin his son—that's the truth on it, and 'tis my doing; but I didn't go to do it. I went to Mr. Reece's for shop-paper. Says he, 'Tell Mr. Preston there will be eleven and ninepence to pay for the wrappers, and there is half-a-crown owing for a book young Mr. Preston had, and said his father would pay for it.' I asked Mr. Reece to put the name down on a bit of paper, and

I gave it to your father, and he turned white all over."

"What book was it?" said poor Leah. "A bad book?"

"I don't know; very like some book of witchcraft. 'How to raise the Devil,' I should not wonder."

"I suppose it was Latin or Greek. Poor dear Perth!" said Leah with a sigh, "he is always getting into trouble with his learning."

"Ah! miss, he'd better have stayed for the *haysell*. He might have got took on by Farmer Giles, where I work; the farmer wants hands."

"Did you see or hear anything about Perth, excepting about the book, at Stoneham?"

"No, miss; no one said nothing about him to me."

"Thank you, Dick. I must go in now. If you should hear anything about Perth, pray come and tell me at once."

Leah went up to say her prayers by her father's bed, and, if she could summon courage, to confess her love for Sir Edgar.

He was lying awake, and having heard the murmur of voices, in which he recognised that of Dick Crozier, he guessed that the conversation had turned on Perth. He began, therefore, after appealing to Leah to know whether his surmise was just—

"Of what didst thou speak to that youth under the window, Leah?"

"Of Perth, my father."

"Of that unhappy boy! who has chosen to act all uncleanness with greediness!—who is made desolate because of his sins! See, my daughter, the evil of deceit. Thy brother disobeyed my wishes; he robbed me, and deceived me. He continued to deceive me for years; his habits of deceit have ripened into dishonesty practised on a stranger. He buys one of those evil and forbidden books, and being without money to purchase the object of his desire, he lies, saying I will pay the cost of it. Let him hunger and thirst, and let no one feed him, or give him to drink. Then, being brought low, it may be, perchance, that he returneth to the home that he left in the pride and arrogance of his heart, and may humble himself in the dust, and pray for forgiveness. I might pardon, but I never could again trust one who has deceived me. Leah!" he said, turning to her suddenly, and grasping her wrist—stung by a sudden remembrance of Luke's innuendoes as to both his children—"if I ever find thou hast deceived me, I will send thee from my home, never to return!"

"Oh, father! do not, do not!" shrieked poor Leah, on whose pale lips a confession had been trembling for the last ten minutes. "Do not threaten to send me from thee, whatever faults I may——"

"Fear not, my own Lucy's daughter. Sin never dwelt in so pure a tabernacle," said Caleb Preston,

touched by the agitation which the possibility of his displeasure had created, and little knowing the cause of her excessive emotion. "I have none but thee, my daughter. Let no dissensions darken our dwelling, from which the evil-doer has departed."

"Father! father! forgive him—recall him. Thou hast said that we are all born in sin. Surely it was ordained, for some wise purpose yet unknown, that Perth should err in this matter, and yet be brought back to the fold of the true Shepherd at last! Think of him, my father, without food or shelter, exposed to the noontide heat and the evening dews. He is the son of thy dear wife, my glorified, saintly mother! Let inquisition be made for him. Let his sin be blotted out."

"Hush, child! touch not the ark of the Lord with profane hands. Mix not thyself with matters too high for thy comprehension. Leave me, that I may seek counsel in prayer from on high."

"Father, thou wilt not send me from thee? Say that thou wilt not!"

"Thou hast not deceived me, child. Let that be thy answer."

The anger felt by Caleb Preston at his son's apparent deceit and dishonesty in leaving his father to pay for the indulgence of a taste which he considered sinful, had taken from him the desire which Miss Elliot's statement had awakened in his mind to seek Perth out and bring him home. He could

not be suffering from hunger and thirst, Caleb believed, if he could obtain goods under false pretence—become a swindler, as the stern father chose to term the transaction, for the sake of a forbidden pleasure. So he hardened his heart against the starving youth who was too proud to beg, and knew not in the few intervening days how to obtain employment. It was fortunate that no manual labour exhausted the powers of life, thereby increasing the inevitable craving for food.

As in the boat containing a famine-stricken crew the sufferers for a time forgot their pangs of hunger whilst one well read in Bible lore retailed the story of Joseph and his brethren, so Perth partly forgot the gnawing sensation in his stomach whilst engaged in unravelling the meaning, by slow degrees, of the Iliad, which his imperfect knowledge of Greek made an anxious labour of love. He little knew how the unprincipled grocer had increased his father's anger against him by the reflection on his honesty. He was stung, not by any injury inflicted on himself, but by the just reproaches showered by Hector on the panther-decked beauty of his brother Paris, and had glowed with shame when the nobler warrior speaks of the charms of the flowing tresses and the silver lyre of Paris, and tells him he is a warrior only amongst women. Perth had never seen a translation of Homer, and the beauties of the poet came upon him with a sense of surprise. One feeling rose paramount to

every other in the breast of Perth—a longing desire to see the scenes in which such battles had been fought, such stirring war-cries uttered, such noble words sung. Perth knelt on the ground in the avenue, and made a resting-place on the seat for his Iliad and lexicon; where, when the twilight made the pale, ill-printed Greek characters dazzle before his weary eyes, he covered them with his hand, and saw in fancy the blind old man in Chios' lonely isle, with his inartificial shell and inspired countenance, and round him groups of youth of both sexes — of the rich and the poor, of the jewel-crowned chief, and the wine-treaders, and the fishermen who lingered from their boats, and dropped the coils of rope from their unconscious hands. All had faded from the world but the memory of the words uttered by that poet half divine. Perth longed to witness the scenes where Homer had lived and sung. He might, perhaps, reach the Grecian isle, but he feared that the locality of Troy was too doubtful to offer much enjoyment in the anticipation of going over its foundations.

In a few days (he counted the hours, poor fellow! for he was very hungry) he should receive the money for his clothes, and then he would start for some seaport, and try to get employment on board a vessel bound to the Mediterranean.

Time dragged his flight very slowly, in Leah's

opinion, during the day when Sir Edgar had said he could not see her in the morning. She had not told her father, and so she might have met him as usual. It was very wicked not to have confessed her sin; but her father's anger at the comparatively innocent denial practised by Perth, in learning against his knowledge, had terrified her when on the point of confiding her grief, and had frozen the flowing words as they rose to her lips. And now she felt wickedly rejoiced that she had not confessed, for if this day dragged so wearily without him, how could she bear never to see him again? Whatever Mr. Preston might think with regard to their marriage, she knew he would admit of no communication till Edgar was of age—nine months! "How could I live nine months without seeing him, when this weary day seems never likely to be over?"

The dresses were finished and had been sent home. Leah had rather a hope that Miss Bruee might pay her at once, that she might try to find Perth, and give him the greater part of the money; but, though the boy had been told to wait for a message in case there should be any answer, the governess did not care to take the trouble to get the money from her writing-desk. So Leah stitched away on the delicate fabric of Sir Edgar's cambric and lace, and presently heard a conversation between the scullions and old Molly.

"Three pounds of lard *directly*, Mrs. Molly. Dear me! 'tis hot coming along the road."

"Why don't you come across the park, then?" said Molly, who was weighing the lard. "'Tis cooling enough under the trees."

"Well, you see, 'tis a bit shorter by the road; and then I thought I might see Dick Crozier mowing the other side, on Farmer Giles's land; but, Lord's sake, make haste. Pound and half of soft sugar. We've got a fine kit of folks to-day. Sir Edgar is gone to fetch a young lady; must get a wonderful lunch for her—everything of the best."

"Lor!" said Molly; "what's she like?"

"Don't know; haven't seen her. Lady's-maid is a fine stuck-up thing. Came early this morning. '*This* my room!' said she. 'Where's the wax candles for the dressing-table?' and she whipped them off her lady's toilette-cover, and carried them to her own bed-chamber. Says she, 'You'll be sure to get more for her afore she comes.' There's impudence for you!"

Molly was silent, meditating that Mr. Preston might increase his profits by laying in a store of wax as well as of tallow candles.

"Well, neighbour, I must be off. You can put the things down to the bill."

A pretty long one it was, for Mr. Preston was very sparing in his family expenditure, and had saved a few hundreds during his servitude with

Lord North; consequently he was not reduced to the expedient of small tradesmen in the neighbourhood of giant proprietors, who sometimes declare themselves bankrupt that their assignees may demand the payment of their account, which they could not do themselves without offending their customers.

CHAPTER XV.

"Now air is hush'd, save where the weak-eyed bat,
With short, shrill shriek, flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn."

COLLINS.

WHEN night came—or rather evening, for night seems rather to throw the shadow of her dark robe over the summer landscape than its substance—Leah stole out to the forest trysting-place. She had said she would not meet him, but he *might* hope she would change her mind, and go thither on the chance.

The owl skimmed over the distant openings of the park with long, tremulous cries; and Leah saw a timorous hare, with one ear thrown back and watchful eye, steal through the fence of her father's garden, and nibble the young vegetables, no longer protected by the care of Perth. The distant objects, blinded by shadows, deceived the swimming sight of the girl in her way through the woodland walks, but every other sense was gratified. The woodlark, poised in air, sang its enamoured song with a soft reiteration of notes, as if seeking to recall some frag-

ment of forgotten minstrelsy by repeating again and again the preliminary melody. The moon gave a misty, subdued radiance, and swept with its light the half-mown hay-fields, from which the perfume floated across the evening air. Occasionally Leah heard the distant sheep-bell, and as she listened—butno t for that sound—she stepped aside that she might not crush the glow-worm, that insect Hero who lights her evening lamp to lure her Leander to her side.

No Leander, however, was in that misty forest that night. Leah walked on faster as she drew near the seat. She was a little frightened by the darkness, and thought she should have the protection of her lover's presence. By dint of hoping, she had persuaded herself he would certainly be there. She felt her heart sink at the emptiness of the glade. Bobtail was sleeping quietly by the remains of the kitchen fire. His mistress had shut him in lest he should have offered to accompany her, for she dreaded the indiscretion of his bark. Now she wished she had brought him, as a kind of protection against the feeling of loneliness which weighed her down.

She returned slowly, the heavy heart refusing elasticity to her feet. No fastening on this occasion forbade her returning at any hour she pleased. In five nights out of the seven the inhabitants of the cottage left the doors unlocked from forgetfulness. She did not feel as if she could sleep did she retire

to her bed-chamber, and, after a moment's deliberation, she resolved to walk to the Hall, and look at the outside of the grand old pile, which contained him to whom every thought of her heart was given.

Once determined, she went swiftly; for was there not a good chance of her seeing *him?* There was an undefined jealousy of Lady Barbara. It was strange that she felt none of Miss Elliot, who was beautiful, nor of Miss Bruce; but then *he* had told her he loved *her*, and had shown that he preferred her society, when he might have remained at the Hall with either or both those ladies. Lady Barbara was a new comer, and on the first day of her arrival Sir Edgar had omitted to meet Leah.

She began to ask herself what excuse she could make should the servants see and recognise her. She was not ready with an untruth, and declared to herself that she would keep within the shadow of the shrubs. There was a right of way across the park, but no one would think of going near the mansion who had not business there. Leah's restless desire to see Sir Edgar drove her to disregard every suggestion of reason or prudence.

Lights were visible in various parts of the Hall, and from the heat of the weather, the many windows of the drawing-room, which opened on a colonnade composed of light pillars, fragrant with their weight of climbing flowers, were thrown back, and revealed the refined comfort of the interior. As the sides of

the house were flanked by laurels, Leah, after a hurried look to see that she was not followed or not noticed, placed herself near enough to see and hear or guess what passed. How gorgeous the scene appeared to one who had witnessed no other than her father's frugal cottage! The pendants of the glass chandeliers were quivering with the reflected lights of numberless wax candles. The draperies of yellow satin received the warm illumination. A middle-aged man was seated opposite a small table, playing chess with Miss Bruce. He seldom chose to appear in the drawing-room, but having been obliged, as he thought, to pay his homage to his titled guest, he indemnified himself by challenging Miss Bruce to a game which permitted of his silence. That industrious spider, who fancied that the web she had spun to catch the young baronet had been swept away by the advent of Lady Barbara, though discouraged, yet unsubdued by failure, began to attack the subtile fibres in another direction, and to dart piercing glances in the direction of the stately wig which covered the head of the master of the house.

She was a cunning woman, and fancied that to allow herself to be beaten was the best way to win the liking of her adversary; but she soon detected the concealed yawn, repressed by politeness, and made haste to recover herself by careful play. Mr. Elliot, who had been thrown off his guard by what he called child's play, was astonished by a skilful

move, which he believed at first was accidental. It was succeeded by another and another equally good, and the gentleman's attention was riveted to the game. Now this was only a degree better than the weariness which threatened to make her antagonist refuse to play any more; for though, when Miss Bruce had played her piece, she leaned her head on a very round white arm, and regarded Mr. Elliot languishingly, that was the very moment when, his soul in arms and eager for the fray, he kept his eyes fixed on the board; and when his move was made, she had so much to do to counteract it, and avoid the disgrace of a defeat, which would have ended the game, that she could not find out whether he ever looked at her or not. Certainly she never found him giving her even a transient glance.

Once or twice she encountered his hand when they changed pieces, but the blood of middle-aged gentlemen does not precipitate itself onward on the touch of a pretty woman, as it would have done thirty years before.

She did not find that she had made any progress, and hesitated whether to beat or be beaten at the end of the evening. At length she took the former of the two alternatives, feeling that if Mr. Elliot were victorious he would be content; if defeated, he would be determined to play again on the following evening with her: and she had the happiness of hearing him demand his revenge when they rose

to retire for the night, he having lost a skilfully-played game of two hours' length.

Leah, who was looking in in a way very ill-bred, no doubt, but for which her intense interest in one of the persons contained in that luxurious apartment must plead some excuse, took little or no interest in the chess-players; neither did her eyes rest long on a lovely vision sitting in one of the windows, in an easy-chair, with her light hair flowing over her shoulders, and robed in a white muslin dress, fastened at the breast with a knot of blue ribbon. Miss Elliot was looking up placidly at the sky, in which there was the soft light of stars, and might be engrossed by her own thoughts, or listening to the light laughter or lively talking of a young lady seated at the harp, to the accompaniment of which she frequently added the charm of her voice. This lady was richly dressed in pink satin, which looked amber-coloured in the mellow light.

"Look!" she cried to her companion, "at that—

> "'Pensive nun, devout and pure,
> Sober, steadfast, and demure,
> With looks commercing with the skies,
> Her rapt soul sitting in her eyes.'

Of what is she thinking? Cannot you guess, Sir Edgar?"

Lady Barbara had heard of the engagement; and though she had had good reason for believing that Sir Edgar's affections were not given to Miss Elliot,

she was ready to attribute that young lady's silence and preoccupation to her despair of enchaining the heart of the man to whom she was betrothed.

Sir Edgar was incapable of giving Lady Barbara the idea that Miss Elliot's preoccupation was to be attributed in the remotest degree to him, so he answered—

"Your cousin is a broken-hearted maiden. She has set her desires on that solid bliss which nothing can destroy, except a snail, a cat, or idle boy. She is devoted to horticulture—or rather to anthoculture, if there be such a word. Her spirit is fretted by the ignorance of the venerable gardener, who counteracts all her little plans, and she pines for a departed youth who was too well educated for old Luke, and dismissed by him for that cause; and, since the learned boy left the Hall, grubs have devoured the buds, and aphides the rosebuds."

Lady Barbara laughed, and said something in a lower voice to Sir Edgar; and as he stooped to listen, a spasm of jealousy contracted the heart of Leah. She had seen the lady hitherto behind the glistening strings of her harp, which gave a magical charm to her appearance as she was made half visible through their fretwork; but now she rose, and came forward and stood near the window, and Leah, seeing her distinctly, was almost consoled by her want of beauty, especially when seen by the side of Miss Elliot. Lady Barbara herself was by no means

troubled by the thought that any one could make odious comparisons between her and the most perfect beauty ever created since Eve adorned the garden of Eden. She had been always taught to believe herself irresistible—had always found herself so. Young, though six years older than the youth at her side, noble by birth, and inordinately wealthy, with a fair amount of cleverness, she had found herself an object of worship from her earliest childhood. Being assured always that there was no one so worthy of love as herself, she gladly adopted both the idea and its results, and expended the whole of her devotion on her own little person. She was never grateful for love, because she considered it to be a debt owed to her, of which she was determined to exact the uttermost farthing—if she happened to think of her debtors at all; but the numbers were so large, that they might go without her ever missing them, and return again without a welcome. The world was to her one vast baby-house full of toys; she felt they were all hers, and trying to grasp them all, dropped half without perceiving it, or caring for those she no longer grasped. Leah had reason to be comforted in her lack of beauty. Her complexion was sallow; her nose straight and thin; her eyes narrow and dark; her mouth so expansive, that when, standing towards the spectator full face, she laughed, the corners went out of sight altogether; the teeth were large and white, and showed nearly the whole row,

top and bottom; her figure slight and flat, but agile and graceful. Leah pronounced her, in her mind, to be "quite ugly;" but, a moment after, she was aware of a strange fascination in her face, which made her hesitate as to whether she was plain or good-looking.

The poet, speaking of his heroine, says she was—

"Bless'd with that charm—the certainty to please."

Lady Barbara had the charm that consisted in being perfectly pleased with herself, though I do not think this was the idea meant to be conveyed by the poet of human life, who meant to refer to the conviction in the lady's mind that all she said or did would be pleasing to her lover; but as Lady Barbara believed the whole world to be her lovers, it came very much to the same result.

"Pray sing that song once more, my lady," said Sir Edgar gallantly, "that I may go to bed and dream of the charming melody."

"The harp-strings will break if I have it brought so near the window, and 'tis too hot in the room."

"Then sing without music," said Miss Elliot. "I admire your singing so much," she said simply, and without the slightest admixture of pique at Sir Edgar's seeming admiration of her guest.

Then Lady Barbara leaned on the back of the old chair of carved oak, and sang, without accompaniment, the following words:—

"O Katie! my queen! art thou sleeping?
Cold shadows have sunk on the lea;
From her nest the small shrewmouse is peeping,
Lest shriek-owl or pussy may see.
But no one is watch o'er thee keeping,
Then steal from thy bower, love, to me.

"Each flower its small folds closer bringing,
Shuts out the cold breath of the air;
Ah! would that my arms round thee clinging,
Might keep off the chill of each care,
And *Love's* shelter o'er thy life flinging,
Make it bright as thy beauty is rare."

"Very pretty indeed," said Mr. Elliot, rising after receiving his checkmate.

Miss Bruce had looked very earnestly at her antagonist as Lady Barbara sang the last verse, hoping he would apply the words to herself; but he misunderstood the look, and thought the governess was only anxious that he should say something civil to the songstress at the conclusion of the lay, as he might be supposed to have neglected the lady during the chess-playing. Lady Barbara bowed carelessly and put out her hand, saying good night, which Mr. Elliot kissed with an elaborately-executed bow, and then, touching the tips of her fingers daintily, he conducted her to the door, whither she was followed by his daughter. Then he returned with more natural ease to the drawing-room, and informed Sir Edgar that that woman had made his head whiz unpleasantly with her confounded chess, and he should be glad to go to bed. Thus Sir Edgar was left alone in the luxurious room. Leah watched him

with her heart beating wildly; she wondered how often he had thought of her during that evening—if he had dreamed of her in that scene of wealth and refinement. She began to understand something of the claims made on him by the society of his equals, and that he could hardly, without observation, have dashed away to the forest to meet her. But the conviction depressed her; she felt like a child who has leaped over a succession of small pools on the seashore, and finding them unaccountably broadened by the returning tide, trembles lest she should be swept away by the inevitable ocean.

Sir Edgar came and leant against the window-sill, and looked out thoughtfully on the parterre. "Oh, Sir Edgar!" poor Leah's heart was murmuring, "why cannot you guess that I am near you?" She was withheld by shame from the audible whisper of his name, which would have brought him in an instant to her side.

He whistled gently a few bars of the air Lady Barbara had just sung, and then hummed a few of the words:—

"Then steal from thy bower, love, to me."

It almost seemed as if he had known she was there. A conviction came on her mind that he was loving her and thinking of her with a constancy which not even the life that surrounded him, in which she had no part, could deaden or destroy. She knelt

on the turf, and stretched her arms towards him as he leant in the soft moonlight against the flowering shrubs on the window-sill, and then raising them to the star-lit sky, she said, "Bless him! bless him!" When her fervent prayer was uttered, and she looked again, Sir Edgar had turned away, and had rung the bell. The footman came and shut the glass doors and closed the shutters, and Leah felt that she was doubly excluded, by the different circumstances of their daily lives, from the creature for whom her attachment had become almost idolatrous.

But she went back more hopefully, from the echo of his words on her heart. She was sure he had thought of her, and of the night-tryst she had refused to grant him.

CHAPTER XVI.

"He who stems a stream with sand,
And fetters flame with flaxen band,
Has yet a harder task to prove—
By firm resolve to conquer love."

Morning came, with breath all incense and cheek all bloom, and it shed its light on no creature more delicately lovely than Leah Preston. When the small arrangements of her household were concluded, she took her work-basket and sped away over the moss-covered paths to her bower in the forest. Bobtail accompanied her; for she was grateful for the more acute instinct which could tell of her lover's approach before her sense apprised her of his coming. She had not long to wait before he came crashing through the bushes, and caught her to his breast.

He had had a little doubt whether Leah would tell her father or not, in which case he knew he should never be allowed to see her again. The anxiety had made his greeting more tender than usual.

He did not mention his half-formed fear; he would not remind her of the omitted duty by any reference to their conversation on the previous occasion.

"Put down your sewing and let me hold both your hands. Oh, Leah! I do love you so!" said the youth, looking on her sweet downcast face. "You can do that stupid herring-bone after I go. I shall have to leave you when the luncheon-bell rings."

"Why must you?" Leah asked jealously.

"My child, I am engaged to ride with Lady Barbara after luncheon; but 'tis only nine o'clock," said he, taking from his pocket a watch, large according to present idea, but a perfect marvel of minuteness then, and embossed with finely-executed gold figures of Cimon and Iphigenia, "and that will give me four hours with one with whom I would gladly spend my whole life."

"Were you amused last evening, *sir?*" said Leah.

"Yes, *madam*," he said, mocking the formality of her address to him.

"Oh!" she said.

"You deserved that answer," said Sir Edgar, "for thinking I could be amused in your absence."

"And I believe I was not far wrong in my thought," said Leah, with a little quaver in her tone, remembering how gaily she had heard him laugh as he leant over Lady Barbara and her harp.

"I am sure I don't know by what right or on what ground you arrive at that conviction," said Sir Edgar, a little offended; but his anger softened into

tenderness as he saw the tears falling from her melting blue eyes on those purely-tinted cheeks.

"Oh, my love! do not doubt me," he said, tightening his arm round her slender waist, and kissing the half-averted face. "I do not think," he continued, "I was amused at all. I was glad when they were all gone to bed, and I was left to my own thoughts, which were then uninterruptedly given to you. One is forced by politeness to appear happy when others strive to amuse you, or to show oneself ungrateful for, or inattentive to, their efforts. Miss Elliot is a very silent person. Miss Bruce and Mr. Elliot played chess."

"And the strange lady! What did she do?"

"Oh! she played on the harp and sang."

"Does she sing well?"

"Yes; her voice is very fine, and she has been perfectly taught."

"Tell me the words of the song."

Sir Edgar repeated them; he had often heard them in former days, and knew them perfectly. He uttered them with the tenderest expression in lips and eyes directed to Leah. Rendered careless by her sense of intense happiness, she said softly—

"When you sang that line, standing by the window, were you thinking of me?"

When there is a secret, the shrewdest and most careful amongst us will do well never to let the conversa-

tion turn to the mysterious subject, lest, in an evil moment, we should betray our own counsel, or, what is far worse, that of another.

"How do you know I stood by the window and repeated any line?" said Sir Edgar wonderingly. "Surely you cannot have learned anything from the servants;" and the possibility of her conversing with them gave him an unpleasant sensation, which he did not stop to analyse.

"I never talk to any servant excepting old Molly," said Leah, rather hurt.

"Then how could you know that I stood by the window? I remember now, perfectly, that I did do so. Yes, I was thinking of you, and you only. But how did you know it?"

Then Leah concealed her glowing face against the lace-embroidered ends of the handkerchief which was passed round his neck and fell over his breast, and faltered out her confession—that she had watched him from the shrubs at the side of the house, because she could not let the whole day pass without seeing him. Sir Edgar kissed her passionately on eyelids and lips, but was somewhat troubled by trying to recall all that Leah might have seen and heard. He knew that he loved her better than any one in the world, but felt that she might fairly have taken umbrage at his manner to Lady Barbara.

However, Leah seemed as happy as her over-

whelming shame at the confession she had been compelled to make permitted her to be. She, being then quite satisfied as to the amount of Sir Edgar's affection, dared not look beyond the enjoyment of the present hour. She would tell her father all, but not now; not till after the *fête*-day, she thought, as Sir Edgar called it, instead of the feast-day, as the labourers expressed it. They were most right, because they used their own language; but Leah did not think of that.

Leah had a passing hope that her father might not forbid her going. He had recovered sufficiently to look forward to proceeding to Stoneham on the following day to pay his bills, and to inquire after Perth, and into the secret of that disgraceful transaction by which he was left indebted to the extent of half-a-crown to Mr. Reece, incurred by his son. He was not sorry, either, to avoid the scene of riot which the stately old park would probably become at a period when gentlemen were generally picked up by their footmen from under the table after dinner, and when, for one day in the year at least, ploughmen might hope for an opportunity of signalising themselves in a similar accomplishment.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Hither let the village swain repair,
And light of heart the village maiden gay,
To deck with flowers her half-dishevell'd hair,
And celebrate the merry month of May;
And when mild evening comes in mantle grey,
Let not the blooming band make haste to go."

THE proceedings were to begin with a dinner at one o'clock in the day, and a supper at six. Women were to have tea provided for them at four o'clock, to supply a sufficient amount of which Miss Elliot and the female servants at the Hall had been making muslin bags, containing a quarter of a pound each, which were to be boiled in a large brewing-vat. Mr. Elliot had expressed a faint wish for an ox roasted whole, which he imagined would produce a great effect in the county papers, but his practical daughter was of opinion that the meat would be more thoroughly cooked, and more easily carved, when it had been previously cut into joints; so she kissed her father's forehead, and reminded him that he had given the party to please her, and that she must have her own way. From the numbers to be provided for, it was found impossible to supply them with hot joints, the cooks having been roasting

sirloins and ribs, and boiling rounds of beef, for some days before the festal entertainment. Plum puddings were in great abundance, and hogsheads of good ale were placed under the trees, with a responsible servant to draw it for the guests. Tarts were avoided, for the want of dishes was found to present insuperable difficulties, as the housekeeper objected to the use of her china, and Miss Elliot had not thought of purchasing common tart-dishes till it was too late. Of beefsteak pies, and those made of rabbits, chickens, and pigeons, there was an ample supply. Miss Elliot had desired every guest to bring his own plate, knife, fork, and spoon, as she anticipated that if her father provided them the plates would be recklessly smashed, and the knives, forks, and spoons less recklessly, but most dishonestly pocketed.

"For what a set of people you are providing!" said Sir Edgar, somewhat contemptuously.

"That is to say," replied the young lady, "that you underrate temptations you have never felt; but are you so perfect that you never succumb to the sins that so easily beset the wealthy?"

"I am a man of honour," said Sir Edgar.

"Do you never deceive man or woman? You are a man of honour, no doubt. Will your honour stand in the way of your inclinations, if they should be base? You may reply that the inclinations of an honourable man are never base. If this be so, I

fear the race is a rare one. It seems to me that a man of honour may act as he pleases, if he pay to a fraction his losses at play, and can rightly calculate every degree of affront, to wipe it out at the point of his sword by the blood of his adversary."

Thus spoke Miss Elliot, who had carefully gauged the character of the man to whom she had been from childhood betrothed.

"Is this your deliberate opinion of me, Miss Elliot?" said the young man with a heightened colour.

"It is," answered Rose Elliot calmly.

"In that case, I think we may consider any engagement which may have existed between our parents and guardians, with regard to our future union, to be at an end."

"Bless me!" said Rose, smiling, "I came to that decision some months since. Now, pray do not deprive us of the pleasure of your company, in consideration of your outraged sensibilities and wounded affections. Who is to amuse Lady Bab, if you do not, I cannot imagine, and I do not see why we should not be good friends and cousins, though we can be nothing more to each other."

She held out her hand frankly, and looked so handsome and spirited as she spoke, that, notwithstanding his love for poor Leah, he felt a pang of regret that he had not appropriated Rose as his wife. A man who is dismissed by a lady from an engage-

ment which he wished to be dissolved sometimes looks exceedingly foolish, and Sir Edgar was no exception to this custom.

Miss Elliot pitied his awkward position, and asked him to assist her in making some roses of white and pink paper, to hang in wreaths round the pillars in the ball-room. There Lady Barbara found them, in the afternoon of the day on which the pealing of the luncheon-bell had separated him from Leah's side. She was as ill-tempered as gentle ladies can be when, in the course of their smooth lives, they feel the crumpling of the rose-leaf. A horse and cart had been despatched to Stoneham to bring back a sacred box of millinery, which was expected from Lady Barbara's dressmaker in town, and had returned with his cart empty—no parcel for Lady Barbara having arrived by the mail on the preceding evening.

"I shall not have a dress fit to appear in," she said snappishly, "even before these stupid louts of country squires and their families."

Miss Elliot felt that the lady was ill-bred; but suggested, as a topic of consolation, that the box might arrive on the following evening in time for the ball. She would write a note to request the people at the coach-office to send it over by their horse and cart, as her father's men were naturally all counting on—

"One long summer's day of indolence and mirth."

With this hope, which Lady Barbara declared to be rather a forlorn one, she was compelled to be content, so she sat down, and taking a pair of scissors, began to snip the paper roses to pieces as fast as Miss Elliot cut them out and sewed them together. Rose's patience was trembling on the verge of extinction; at length she was struck by a fortunate idea.

"Are you going to dance the minuet to-morrow night, Sir Edgar?"

"That will depend on whether Lady Barbara will honour me by her acceptance as a partner," he replied, not sorry to offer a parting slight to the young lady who had dismissed him so peremptorily.

"In that case, you had better walk through the steps together, to see that you are in accord. I will sing the Minuet de la Cour to you. I can do that and sew my roses at the same time."

Sir Edgar immediately fetched his hat, when Lady Barbara rose, and presenting her hand to the young gentleman, he conducted her to the top of the room, and they began the movements of one of the most graceful dances ever performed by youth and beauty. To this followed the Gavotte; but here a difference of opinion took place between the lady and the gentleman, and Rose was obliged to repeat the air again and again, till her voice failed her.

"I really hope my new ball-dress will not be

so scanty as this morning wrapper, or the folds will look very poverty-stricken," said Lady Barbara.

"I think it looks very charming," said Rose, who admired the wonderful grace of her ladyship's pliant figure, and was generously pleased to praise her.

Sir Edgar, thinking he had performed his duty sufficiently well for that day at least, now sauntered to the stable to look at his horses.

Lady Barbara, flinging about firebrands, like him mentioned in the Proverbs, who said, "Am not I in sport?" inquired—

"Are you engaged to Sir Edgar, Miss Elliot?"

"No, I am not. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, only because he proposed to me a year ago!"

"And you accepted him?"

"I! that is likely indeed! *I* accept a simple baronet of moderate fortune! My dear, of what can you be thinking?"

"I beg pardon for my simplicity; but, with my rustic notions, I fancied his manner to you was that of an accepted lover."

The young lady winced, for propriety in those days was not entirely expunged from the necessities of female conduct, and Miss Elliot had thus paid off on her guest some of the insulting speeches the little lady had indulged her ill temper in on that morning.

Rose wanted some little consolation, for she was so weary with her incessant toil in preparing for her village feast that she could hardly sit up through a rather tedious dinner, and the party broke up early, to be ready for the genial labours of the following day.

However gentle and sweet Leah's disposition might be, she had the truly feminine wish to appear dressed in the costume of a higher rank than that to which she was by her position entitled. The pattern of Miss Bruce's new dresses threw a temptation in her way Leah could not resist, and she bought herself some muslin for a white gown, and some of a thinner quality for a clear handkerchief, which was surrounded by a frill, and finished by long ends which passed under her arms and were tied behind. The light bodice showed to advantage a full bust and slender waist; it was of moderate length, in a peak in front, from which depended full folds before and behind, whilst the muslin set tightly over the hips. When Leah had dressed herself, after her father and the blind pony had departed to Stoneham, she was conscious of a guilty joy that he could not see nor disapprove of her costume. He was quite capable, she knew, of making her take it off, and dress herself again in the ordinary chintz with large flowers, open in front, and showing a dark petticoat, rather short, and only partly concealed by a coarse white apron. It

was true that Sir Edgar had first seen—had loved her in this attire; but she looked forward to being his wife, and wanted to appear more, in her dress at least, as his equal. Not satisfied with the hair drawn to the top of her head by pins, she went to bed with her soft locks in curl-papers, and when she was ready to go to the feast, she released the curls from their durance, and allowed them to fall over her shoulders and bosom.

"I can pin them up again to the top of my head," she told old Molly, "should they come out of curl and look untidy."

Her little efforts to attain to a ladylike appearance were very sad. There was one deficiency in her attire which made the tears gather in her eyes. She had no gloves such as ladies wear, and her forefinger was covered with dark prickings from her needle. She wished so much that she had gloves; for, though her hands were slender and white, she could not tell how to conceal the mourned-for deficiency of their clothing. She took out a clean pocket-handkerchief and held it partly over the left hand, but she saw it looked like a pretence, and returned it to her pocket.

"Lor'! you do look beautiful, Miss Leah!" cried old Molly, who saw there was grief in the girl's face, and essayed her small powers of consolation; "quite like a lady."

Leah burst into tears.

"What is it, my dear?" said Molly, with sympathetic water rising in her withered eyelids.

"I have no gloves, Molly—all ladies wear gloves; and look at that ugly grey-looking mark which won't come off my forefinger."

Women understand each other's feelings with a quickness of apprehension which the most devoted masculine attachment cannot reach. Caleb would have laid down his life for his daughter, but he would have been utterly without sympathy for this trivial distress.

"Oh! Miss Leah, I am so glad—'tis quite lucky! The lady's-maid up at the Hall sent a box of gloves to be returned to Stoneham by your papa this morning, and he was gone before they came, so the boy left them till further orders, and you can fit yourself to a pair."

Leah's tears began to give place to a smile. "Oh, Molly, I am afraid they cost a great deal! Look, there is the mark—four shillings and sixpence. I must not have them." This was uttered with a faltering voice.

Molly said, "Don't vex yourself, nor spoil your pretty face with crying;" and leaving Leah with the delicate white gloves in her hand, united at the wrists by a few striches Leah did not dare to sever, Molly went up-stairs, and the girl heard a tremendous scraping, made by her pulling her box from under the bed. At length she reappeared with the

money in sixpences and coppers, screwed up in a piece of paper, to the proper amount, and deposited it in the place of the abstracted gloves; then kissing Leah, she bade her "go and enjoy herself with the best of them."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"A great family,
That with strong beer and beef the country rules."
ROCHESTER.

ON the morning of the eventful Thursday, "up rose the sun and up rose Emily," or, in prosaic language, Miss Elliot emulated Dryden's heroine, but with graver cares than those of the fair creature who did "observance to the lively May." Her first anxiety was dispelled by the glory of the morning. Had there been a cloud on the horizon, the quantity of awning provided would have been insufficient, and the servants' hall must have been sacrificed to the accommodation of the old people; as it was, they could sit in the tents and be sheltered from draughts, which would do no damage to the younger and stronger portion of the community. Mr. Elliot had put no limitation to the expenditure of money on this occasion, but he declined to be troubled by any details of trivial difficulties, and Rose Elliot could obtain neither sympathy nor assistance from Sir Edgar, who might have aided her by his exertions had he felt it to be his vocation; but the selfish-

ness of giving way only to his own desire of occupation had overcome him too thoroughly to admit of his making himself useful in the way by which he might have benefited his young hostess. Thus Rose had to see that the waggons went out in good time to collect the infirm people, who were for the whole of their lives compelled to move only from chimney-corner to bed and back again, unless on some occasion as exceptional as the present. It was important that this should be completed at an early hour, otherwise Miss Elliot knew that the horses would neither be fed nor watered by the impatient carters, who would be eager to wash their hands and faces, and don their Sunday best, to be ready for the one-o'clock feeding-time. The butler and footmen, with the steward, gamekeepers, coachmen, grooms, and all necessary or unnecessary male members of a great man's establishment, were busy in setting out the tables with heavy joints—which, as the distance was considerable to which they were carried, the females declared they would not do. Even the scullions had their own little vanities to consult on this occasion, and after sending away, denuded of their calico coverings, the last of many dozen handsome plum puddings, they seized on any spoutless and handleless jugs, which, though cracked, might yet be capable of carrying hot water, and ascending to the attics, took squares of brown soap to destroy the marks of the toil by

which the guests were to benefit. There they scrubbed their shining faces, observing their reflections in triangular bits of looking-glass, by which they arranged their caps, ornamented by the brightest of ribbons—scarlet, orange, purple, and green. Being servants, they were compelled to wear the distinctive dress which on that occasion Leah had set aside. Their gowns were open in front, with sleeves tight to the elbows (small ruffles being worn on holidays), and a white apron in front; the hair drawn back and covered with a round cap, like those preferred at the present day.

Miss Elliot was dressed, as usual, in white soft cambric muslin without a train, which she knew would have very much interfered with the necessary celerity of her movements, however carefully fastened up. Her hair fell over her shoulders without powder, and was surrounded by a gipsy hat, in which she looked very lovely; but the effect was unstudied, for she cared not a rush whether she looked well or not. She was a person of active mind and a healthy frame, not given to "allicholy and musing." She had never felt any preference for one man more than another, and should the whole male creation have been swept away from the surface of the earth—with the exception of her father, for whom she felt the tenderness born of that sense of protection which is usually given by the elder to the younger of the two relations, but

which, in the present case, was reversed—she would have considered the world greatly benefited by the change.

"Men were always obstructives," she said. "There was Sir Edgar, a selfish youth, only caring for his own comforts. There were the men-servants always robbing their master, or deceiving the maids, or quarrelling amongst themselves. There were the grooms neglecting the horses;—had she not seen them bedded-up when their feet had not been properly washed out? and deprived of water when the pump was out of order, because the grooms were too lazy to draw it from the well? And, worst of all, there was that stupid old man, Luke, who would do nothing himself, and permit nothing to be done, and had dismissed the only person who had a grain of sense or information in the whole establishment, to the utter destruction of her new flower-garden and greenhouse."

"Allow me to give you some cold chicken," said Miss Elliot to Lady Barbara at luncheon-time. "Sir Edgar, cut that tongue. You must excuse me if I eat like the Israelites, with my loins girded, for I must return to the ground and represent papa at the first table."

"Thank you," said Lady Barbara superciliously; "but I do not care for cold food at luncheon. I will wait for something hot."

"I fear you will have to wait till to-morrow, then,

unless you can induce your maid to make you a cup of tea and a piece of hot buttered toast. All the servants —at least, all my father's—are holiday-making."

"Really, Rose, I wish you had taken some other time for this merry-making than my visit. I don't care to be a martyr to the general good."

"Never mind for once," said Rose, laughing. "You will be amused by-and-by, no doubt."

"In what way?"

"Oh! we shall have some games between dinner and supper. The men and boys will run races in a part of the park which will be seen from the tent where the old men will sip their ale and smoke their pipes. Of course each veteran will swear by the perfections of his sons and grandsons, and criticise the performances of his neighbour's descendants; but, whilst they enjoy their children's success with reflected pride, they will make a reservation in favour of their own superior performances in past years. There will be prizes given to the swiftest runners in the races—one to the men, one to the boys. The honour will be far greater if Lady Barbara presents them. They will be of little value: the charm will be in the success. A necktie for the men; a wonderfully-painted kite, with string to fly it, for the boys."

"And then?"

"Then the women will run a race. There will be quintain for the men and cockshy for the boys. By

this time they will have become hungry again, and there will succeed the scramble at the *cache*."

"What is the *cache?*" said Sir Edgar.

"It is not *cache* at all, only called so. There is a considerable dip in the park on the north side; at the bottom of this slope there is a large open pit dug, in which will be deposited half a dozen pies baked in tin dishes, a dozen of wine in greased bottles, and a half-dozen gallon kegs of spirits, also greased. The candidates having stripped off coats, waistcoats, and highlows, will be conducted to the top of the hill, preceded by a man with a sack full of currant cakes, which he will fling out on each side of him as he walks on. The cakes will be round at the sides, having being baked in tins, and will roll down the hill pursued by the anxious runners, who will probably find their heels in the air and their heads in a pie-dish in the *cache* at the bottom of the declivity. Besides this, there will be some jumping in sacks amongst the women for flannel and calico, and a donkey-race for the boys, in which the riders will have their faces to the tails of their beasts, and where the last comer will win half-a-guinea; the festivities of the evening to conclude with a dance on the green. At eight o'clock the park will be cleared, as far as orders on such an occasion can be carried out, for the servants will be wanted to attend to our own party in the ball-room. Luckily all our preparations are complete——"

"No, indeed, they are not," interrupted Lady Barbara; "my dress is not come. But I trust it will have arrived by that time. I have ordered it to be brought from the coach-office, and should it not come——"

"That was a magnificent pink satin you wore on Tuesday night; could you not wear that one?" Rose suggested cautiously, for she expected the retort which leaped from between Lady Barbara's vicious-looking teeth.

"Really, my dear, you should not give opinions or make suggestions on subjects of which you know nothing. Fancy *me*, Sir Edgar, wearing satin in a ball-room not enlivened by gauze or lace!"

"I cannot fancy you in any attire in which you would not be very charming," said the gentleman gallantly.

"Good-bye," said Rose. "You can settle that point without my presence;" and she ran off to the dinner-tables under the trees. Here she was speedily occupied in conducting the most infirm to the most comfortable places, and seeing that some responsible persons belonging to the establishment were placed at different parts of the table to carve the joints and distribute the pudding, whilst one of the footmen served the ale from the neighbouring cask. As the chaplain had not yet arrived, Rose Elliot, with beautiful simplicity, said "grace" standing at the head of the table, and then the most

interesting business of the day began to the hungry multitude; who, though their means had not permitted the custom by which Julius Cæsar prepared for a festival at his friends' expense, had done their utmost by eschewing the lump of dry bread with which, on ordinary occasions, they satisfied the cravings of appetite at breakfast-time.

Whilst Rose moved quickly round the table from person to person, piling their plates with cold meat, or, the gravest and most blooming of human Hebes, poured the amber ale into the pewter pints for her venerable guests, Lady Barbara and Sir Edgar strolled into the park, towards the moving mass of gay colours collected under different clumps of trees. Even amongst the refined and educated gay and vivid colours were the rule, and the lower classes naturally delighted to follow a fashion that accorded so well with their own tastes. So the appearance, especially where the scene was reflected on the surface of the tranquil lake, might have afforded opportunities worthy of the painter's toil, had any artist been present to—

"Catch ere they fade the Cynthias of the minute."

"I wonder whether any of the county families will drop in this morning."

"Probably not," replied Sir Edgar; "their carriages will be wanted to bring parties to the ball to-night."

"Oh! 'twas the men I was thinking of, not their wives and daughters," replied her candid ladyship.

"You should have been called Alexandra Barbara, or Barbara Alexandra," observed the young man.

"Why, pray?"

"Because you are always pining for fresh conquests, as did that boy-warrior. Why cannot you leave the poor Essex squires alone?"

Lady Barbara laughed triumphantly.

"It is very well to laugh, Lady Bab, but——"

"Well! but what?"

"It cannot be very pleasant for you to observe that men shot through the heart by glances from those eyes, though they fall insensible at your feet at the instant, or only sensible to the agony you have inflicted, get up again and feel none the worse, and go about their usual avocations and amusements as if there were not a Lady Barbara in the world."

Her ladyship looked provoked, but made no answer, whilst Sir Edgar hummed a verse of the following song:—

"In sleep now no longer thine image I see,
Nor the first of my thoughts when I wake are of thee;
When from thee, no more of thine absence I plain;
When with thee, I feel neither pleasure nor pain."

Lady Barbara smiled a sinister smile, and said, "When my groom assures me, without any ques-

tion asked, that my horse is 'quite sound now,' I always feel disposed to doubt the fact. I did not care to 'speer,' as the Scotch say, as to the state of your affections, young man."

"Of that I am quite aware, madam, but when I heard you 'e'en in penance planning sins anew,' and wanting fresh victims for your altar, I could not help asserting my cure, as those poor wretches do whose letters are published at the end of advertisements of quack medicines."

"Perhaps you mean to insinuate the asseverations of being in perfect health are easily made by those who have not been ill?"

"By no means, madam. When I was a poor Freshman at Cambridge, and was admitted, with a crowd of other neophytes, to the drawing-room of the wife of the Master of Trinity, and there was dazzled by the sight of Lady Barbara's charms, I prostrated myself and worshipped; and when I expressed my adoration, the lady gave me a cool stare, and wondered at my impertinence. I suffered, but without shame; for the number of wounded around me kept me in countenance, notwithstanding the grimaces I made, and the undignified complaints I uttered. The long vacation came—the sick went off for change of air and scene. Lady Barbara, when term recommenced, had been forgotten for tutors' daughters, and even (mention it not) for pretty chambermaids at the Lakes. See how we learn to

prey on garbage, and to relish it, even after feasting with the gods on ambrosial food!"

"And here is food by no means ambrosial or barmecidal," said Lady Barbara, walking up to the table at which Rose was serving her guests, and not sorry to escape from a conversation which was very disagreeable to her vanity.

Rose gave her ladyship a quick smile and recognition as she came, conducted by Sir Edgar; but she was too busy to wait, and her ladyship finding that, till the rage of hunger was assuaged, there was no chance of her winning any admiring glances from chaw-bacons, turned away to inspect the preparations for the sports which were to take place after dinner.

As they walked in the direction of the Pleasaunce, the pair passed by the old shrubbery, which in former days had been a favourite resort for the ladies of the family. When in Italy, many years before, Mr. Elliot had purchased some antique urns, which had ornamented, hundreds of years previously, the garden of a Roman emperor. When the fancy to place them in his own grounds had been gratified, he had ceased to care for them, and in the absence of the family, the gardeners had neglected to tend a portion of the grounds so remote from the house and from probable inspection. So the red roses had supported themselves by the side of their imitated sisters in soft-tinted yellow marble, and the ivy

lovingly embraced the pediment of the urn, on which were sculptured forms in mimic acts of joy and passion, strangely bringing to the spectator, after the lapse of two thousand years, records of human existence as fugitive as the living flowers that clustered round those memories of the past.

A single figure, dressed in white, stood by the side of the urn, seemingly to regard it earnestly; her soft hair flowed over her shoulders, and only the outline of a delicate cheek was visible to the two spectators.

Sir Edgar hardly repressed a start when he recognised Leah in her unaccustomed dress. He felt the awkwardness of the moment, but was too loyal to shrink from what was due both to a woman, and to one to whom he had given his love. When, therefore, Leah, hearing the rustle of leaves near her, turned her head, Sir Edgar, letting Lady Barbara's hand drop for an instant, and taking off his hat, bowed as respectfully to Mr. Preston's daughter as he could have done to one of the royal princesses, or to Queen Charlotte herself. Probably Leah Preston received even a deeper expression of reverence: homage for her beauty and affection was mingled with that of deference for her sex, and pity for the lack of those accidents of station and fortune which would have commanded attention from all.

Lady Barbara saw that Leah Preston was very

different from herself in appearance; and as she considered her own face and form the standard of beauty, she was not disturbed at a style so very opposite to her own. In one point only was there a resemblance. They were about the same height, and could their weight have been tested, it would scarcely have varied more than a pound or two. Leah was younger by ten years, and her bones, equally slender with those of the little lady, were lighter from being less compact.

Leah courtesied first to the lady and then to Sir Edgar in silence, whilst a beautiful colour flushed her cheeks to a deeper rose dye.

Then they passed on, leaving her in a state of fluttered happiness, though she heard Lady Barbara ask the question, "Who is she?" but could not catch the answer made by her lover.

It was the first moment of enjoyment Leah had experienced since she came into the park. The tables were all filled by the aged and infirm, who were taken care of by Miss Elliot; or by those eager, hungry cottagers who fought and hustled to get good places for themselves and their children. Leah was too far above them in position, and immeasurably so in feeling, to scramble for a place at the already crowded tables. One of the footmen, taking her, from the refinement of her appearance, for a lady come to look on or assist, asked her to be kind enough to carry a basket of rolls to a distant table;

which having accomplished, she took one and retreated under the trees to eat it undisturbed.

She was fortunate enough to be near Miss Elliot as that indefatigable young lady, with a wine-glass in one hand and a bottle of port in the other, was giving a little extra treat to the most aged and infirm of her guests.

Rose recognised the daughter of Mr. Preston, and with quick comprehension of her undefined superiority and pity for the fragility of her beauty, dipped the wine-glass in a pail of water, and, filling it with wine, gave it with a smiling grace which made the gift very pleasant to the recipient. The small attention of washing the glass for her, when a similar nicety was not practised for the others, Leah was comforted by and grateful for. Moreover, the wine exhilarated her sinking spirits.

The races were now to take place, and the old folks were conducted to the position which commanded the best view of the course. They were followed by a large crowd of several hundred people, in the good temper which results from satisfied appetite and a sufficiency of malt liquor. Ropes were placed to avoid the pressure of the crowd, and fifteen young men were candidates for the prize.

Leah did not see Sir Edgar. She had lost him and Lady Barbara in the crowd soon after he had bowed to her; and, though she watched the eager multitude till she became giddy at the sea-like

movement of their heads, she could not distinguish him or his companion.

"It is not half so nice as having him all to myself in the forest," said poor Leah; and she felt very dreary, notwithstanding the pretty dress and the delicate kid gloves.

There was one amongst the runners who thought Leah the most beautiful creature in the world, and was only restrained by his reverence for Mr. Preston's daughter from expressing his opinion to any who would listen to him. This was Dick Crozier, who came up to where she was standing, and said—

"I'm going to be one to run, Miss Leah. Don't you wish a poor fellow success?"

"That I do," said Leah heartily. "I had rather you should win the prize than any one, now my poor brother Perth is not here."

"If Perth was here, I don't think I should try. I thought he was here a bit ago. Look at that fellow there; surely that's Perth!"

"Not Perth, but——" And she did not continue, for she was going to say, "But he has on Perth's best suit of clothes."

"I see it is not your brother, now that he turns his face this way, only he is about the same height and size."

The spectators now seated themselves on the acclivity, and round the booth in which the old folks

were smoking their pipes, and ready to pass judgment on the qualities of the youths about to run.

"There is one that don't belong here—that chap with red hair. He's no business to run along with our lads," said one old man.

"Don't say nothing about it—the more the merrier. The great folks don't grudge their vittles at such times as these, and he's my sister's grandson, so he don't seem strange-like."

"For all that, I say he don't live in the parish, and that I shall speak up about it if he goes to take the prize away from the rest of 'em."

The other veteran did not reply to this; for the result of his observations on his grand-nephew was that he had already taken enough ale to prevent his running in a line sufficiently direct to take him to the goal, and it was useless to make a fuss over a circumstance never likely to come to pass.

CHAPTER XIX.

"This famine has a sharp and meagre look—
'Tis Death in an undress of skin and bone,
Where age and youth, their landmarks ta'en away,
Looks all one common sorrow."

DRYDEN.

WE must now turn from a scene of plenty to one of privation, and from satisfied appetites to the sick craving of hunger. The small quantity of rice which Perth allowed himself daily—though, from its expansion in his stomach, he was saved from the terrible feeling of gnawing in it—had been insufficient to keep up his strength. He would have sunk utterly, but that, on the evening previous to that on which he must leave his lodgings—the period for which he had paid having elapsed—the door of the keeping-room opened suddenly, as Perth came in to pass up to his bedroom, and a pale, sad-looking woman came out, and, seizing his hand, brought him into the room, and placed him at the table, where supper was set out.

"He won't be in yet for an hour and a half—'tis his club night. And now you shall have a bit of supper with me, for you are the quietest, cleanest

lodger I've had for many a day." And whilst she talked, she piled his plate with slices of cold salt round of beef, and unlocking a cupboard by a key concealed in her pocket, she produced a bottle of currant wine, and filled Perth's glass, and would have refilled it, but that he placed his hand over it as a signal that he had had enough.

He ate ravenously, and the woman looked at him with an expression of half-divine pity and emotion in her pale face.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Perth, when he had concluded his meal. "I shall often think of your kindness when I am far away from Stoneham."

"You are going away, then?"

"Yes, ma'am; I must go and earn my bread somehow. I can't expect that any one but yourself will be so generous as to feed me for pity's sake."

"Good night, then; and," said she, with a great gulp in her voice, to swallow her tears, "if you should ever meet a boy from Stoneham, pale and thin, like me, who wants a bit of bread, think of this evening, and share your crust with him."

"I will; and may Heaven deal with me according to my sin if I keep not my word," said Perth earnestly.

He put his hand out, and the woman wrung it. This was their farewell.

On the following morning Perth went to the place where he had appointed to deliver the clothes

to his customer, and found that he had left word that Perth was to follow him to another address, where he generally lodged. The first place was at the shop in which he worked. This was a large dilapidated old building, the landlady of which let out rooms for the workers at the different manufactories; and to one of these bedrooms Perth was directed, and found his customer still in bed.

"It is a holiday," said he. "I am glad you are come, for I want to see myself in your togs. I shan't look such a fine fellow as you did, of course," he continued, regarding Perth askance.

He got out of bed, and Perth's sense of cleanliness was outraged by seeing him putting on his clothes without making the slightest effort at an ablution, and now felt himself insulted by this treatment of his best suit. Perth was, however, impatient for his money, and when the clothes were well fitted on, he said he was in a hurry to be off, and should be glad of payment. The young man put his hand in the pocket of his old clothes, and produced more than sufficient; but change was wanted, and that, of course, Perth had not to give, so his customer said he would ask the mistress of the house to change him a guinea, and return there and give him the money. Perth assented, and was left alone. Just as the youth passed the front door, a cart drove by, with young men smartly dressed, wearing their hats, and singing with ill-managed merriment.

"Hallo! where are you going?"

"To the Hall. Just room for one; jump in."

"Hang it! I have not paid that fellow."

"Never mind; pay to-morrow. A month is ready money; money in pocket is a fine thing when one is holiday-making."

Bill Summers jumped in, and the driver giving a cut to the old horse, he sprang on, notwithstanding the additional load, and was out of sight in a few minutes.

Perth waited patiently for five minutes, then with some irritation for another five, after which he walked down and began to look about in different rooms for the wearer of his clothes in vain. A dirtily-dressed woman, with long elf-locks falling from under her tumbled cap, asked him, with some asperity, for what reason he was poking about her house—was he looking for lodgings? Her lodgers, she could tell him, were accustomed to keep themselves respectable, and she looked scornfully at the mended knees of Perth's nether integuments. He explained that he was looking for Bill Summers, who had left him to get a guinea changed by herself; on which the landlady told him to sit down and wait a bit, no doubt Bill would come back directly—probably, not finding her at once, he had gone to the next shop for change. So Perth waited, and told the same tale, in answer to the same question, to the master of the house, who had just come in from the town.

"You will have some time to wait for Bill Summers," said he, "and I would not give you much for your chance of the money. I saw him in a cart, going to the Hall, in company with some other larky chaps. If you want to be paid, you had better follow him there. Your only hope is to get hold of him before his companions get the coin out of him. It won't be long before they do that; first come first served with Bill. I don't think he meant to serve you such a shabby trick—but that's poor comfort when you want your money."

Perth, sick at heart, thanked him for his advice, and prepared to follow it. As he had intended to start on his travels so soon as he had received payment for his clothes, he had his small bundle in his hand. Now he might as well take it back with him, and recommence his journey from his old house—if, indeed, he could obtain his due from Summers; if not, he must get as far as he could from his own neighbourhood, and then ask for work or alms, till work could be obtained from strangers.

Perth hesitated for a moment whether to choose the high road to the village, or to take a shorter cut across the fields. In favour of the former, there was the chance that Bill Summers and his jolly companions might stop at the sign of the Duke of York, and drink. On the other hand, Perth calculated that they would not stop for drink, which must be paid for, when they might get all the

refreshment they required for nothing by going a few miles further on. Moreover, the meadows looked green and inviting, and the road hot and dusty, so he chose the former.

Had he taken the high road this story would never have been written, for over that uninviting road the old blind pony was toiling, his mouth dry and his nostrils stuffed with the dust thrown up by his shambling steps; and driving the cart was Caleb Preston, his cold grey eyes fixed on vacancy, and clouded by troubled thought as to the fate and delinquencies of his only son. It was strange that Mr. Preston was so bigoted to his more recently-formed opinions of the sinfulness of all human learning; that the point on which to others Perth would have seemed most culpable, namely, the obtaining goods under false pretences, sank into nothing compared with the cause of his having run into debt. The half-crown had been expended in the purchase of one of those pestilent Greek poems, the knowledge of which, in former years, had brought Caleb Preston, in his own opinion, to the very gates of hell, from which only the image of his deceased wife had interposed, in a supernatural manner, to save him.

Perth had recognised the well-known tramp of the pony's feet as he struck across the fields at a right angle from the road. He stood still for a few moments to see if his father had recognised him. If he had been walking in the road, and Caleb had

ordered him to get into the cart and return home, the old habit of obedience would have compelled him to respect his father's commands; but not present starvation, nor the prospect of beggary, could induce Perth to admit that he was in the wrong when he did not believe himself to be so. He looked with affection at the figure of his father as it vanished in the distance—a feeling of which he bestowed part on the old pony. He hoped the poor brute was well fed, and properly attended by Dick Crozier. It was a relief that he should not come upon his father in going to the Hall festival; for, though he justly imagined Mr. Preston would not attend it himself, he might have had an unpleasant interview with him in the neighbourhood of his own home, and would have had to explain that though he would have been glad of the barley-meal with which the swine were fed, he had no intention of presenting himself in the character of the prodigal son. All his efforts now must be directed to overtaking Summers, and getting his money. With that he should be enabled to travel with comfort. If he could not succeed, he must go as he could.

After Sir Edgar had passed Leah, and had proceeded on through the park with Lady Barbara, he was strangely tempted to leave the titled lady, and return to the young sempstress; but having walked out with her, he would not desert her in the grounds. He could only have recourse to the

expedient of Sir Thomas More, who ceased to be agreeable to the king when he wanted to be dismissed. Lady Barbara had sufficient reason, she thought, for discontent; for, of all the crowds assembled in the park, no one individual had turned to look at her. The perfection of her attire was thrown away on folks who were ignorant of fashion, and the charm of her clear olive skin was lost on the lower classes, who see no beauty but in white and red. So she declared that village feasts were stupid affairs, that the sun was hot in the open glades, and that the gnats stung her in the shade of the trees. She should return to the house, she said emphatically; and she cast a sidelong glance at her companion, to see if he were overwhelmed at the proposition, but observed only a look of preoccupation, which might mean anything. Probably he meant to remain with her alone after he had escorted her back to the house. She had no intention of indulging him, if that were his wish, for she longed to get to her own room, and take off a tight pair of new stays, which had been sent from town to do justice to the perfect fitting of the unarrived ball-dress. Alas! the buckler had come, but not the bracelet; and, like Tarpeia, she was half suffocated by its pressure.

Sir Edgar had his own little schemes, though they were not, like those of the lady, entirely selfish. Whilst he talked platitudes to Lady Barbara, his

mind was full of Leah. Should he follow his inclination, and devote himself to her for the rest of the day, in the face of all the crowd assembled, her character would be materially damaged; for, of all the hundreds there assembled, there would probably not be one, except Leah herself, who would believe that his intentions towards her were honourable.

He was not prepared to say that they were honourable—that he could consent to call the chandler papa. He could not consent, either, to inflict pain on that innocent child by separating himself from her. He remembered how exquisitely beautiful she had looked in that cool retreat in the shrubbery, standing near the Grecian vase, which had once ornamented the gardens of the Roman emperor, but never, in the lapse of centuries, could have been gazed on by a face more lovely or refined. He wondered if she had had anything to eat that morning. The others were all occupied at the tables, but she stood alone, and seemingly neglected, in that sylvan retreat; she had not appeared to know whither to direct her steps, and probably he should find her there still.

He made his way to the housekeeper's room, to ask for sandwiches, but she had gone out into the park. He obtained a basket, however, and proceeding to the hothouses with a knife, he contrived to unbolt one of the doors by the fracture of a small pane of glass, and filled his basket with leaves and purple

grapes, tempting from their untouched bloom. This young baronet was scarcely more than a youth yet, and had sufficient of boyhood left to enjoy the notion of sharing the fruit in secret with Leah. He went off with a very light heart straight to the urn; but she was not there. He concealed the basket carefully amidst the shrubs, and then, climbing up on one of the empty waggons, he looked about him to seek to distinguish one white speck amidst the crowd of gaily-painted and large-flowered chintzes. Probably she might be looking on at the foot-races, and he went to the elevated part of the park where the old men were smoking their pipes. There he saw Leah; and, as she was observing with a perplexed countenance the untoward movement of the limbs which were dressed in her brother's clothes, a voice whispered behind her, "Go to the shrubbery where I saw you standing by the urn, and I will follow you thither."

Leah flushed with surprise and pleasure.

"Do not turn—do not look," the voice said, and she obeyed. How happy she was! The day had been a failure hitherto; she had not cared much to see lean old women and fat boys cramming themselves to repletion with beef and pudding—

> "For other sounds, alas! her ears repine,
> A different object do those eyes require."

The bow he had given her was very graceful, and

his paying her that homage, as if she were his equal, was very gratifying; but it was but cold comfort when her cheeks yet glowed with the memory of the kisses he had impressed on them, and when she longed to feel once more the tension of his glowing arm round her waist.

She did not make this clear to her own mind by any train of reasoning; but, obeying the impulse given by his words and her own inclination, she returned to the shrubbery, which Sir Edgar reached by a different path; and her lover, with boyish delight, lifted the green leaves and showed the purple treasures beneath them; and then, taking her hand, he conducted her to a secluded summer-house, where they shared the stolen prize, and babbled their innocent love-talk for a happy hour and a half, whilst the busy crowd had been occupied, less agreeably, in witnessing the sports provided by Miss Elliot for their amusement.

Leah's absence from the spot on which she had been standing a few minutes previously deprived her of the sight of Perth, who, faint and weary, had arrived just before the races had begun, and after the tables had been cleared from the fragments of the dinner. He saw, in the distance, Bill Summers disgracing the clothes that were Perth's by the irregular and purposeless movement of the limbs which they covered. Perth had come too late to catch him before the runners had started, but he

consoled himself by the conviction that he should meet him at the winning-post—to which, therefore, he directed his steps. No one was allowed to step within the rope which marked off the course, so he would have gained nothing by attempting to follow him, even could his weary and enfeebled frame have offered a chance of his succeeding in the effort. As the race-ground made a circuit of the park, Perth crossed at once to the goal, and waited for the candidates for the prize to come in. He stepped back, however, for an instant, for, with dilated nostrils, open mouth, flushed face, and heaving chest, Dick Crozier was first at the winning-post, and was greeted with shouts so loud that the echoes in the old woods rang with the gladsome sound. Dick looked very sheepish, and wonderfully proud, when the silk neckerchief was presented to him, and doubted whether he should present the prize to Leah, or whether he should not produce more effect by showing her how nice he looked with it on on Sundays at her father's meeting-house.

Perth did not like his old friend to see his down-fall in circumstances. He was afflicted, more than a young scholar devoted to classics should have been, at the shabbiness of his own appearance compared with that of his old playmate. Dick was dressed in his best suit. His shirt was white as snow, and well ironed by his grandmother, who had spun the flax of which it had been woven, and had made the

garment herself—a perfect wonder of stitching. Perth's shirt had, alas! been washed by himself in a running stream, and dried in the sun; and, though foreign nations contrive to obtain a dazzling brilliancy by this process, Perth was conscious that his rough-dried linen was not a success: moreover, he felt as if he had allowed himself to be overreached in the matter of the sale of his clothes, and thought that he could not bear the rough jeering of his old companion.

He withdrew, then, for an instant, and observed that Dick was self-occupied, and the spectators occupied in observing him. Many compliments were paid him on his performance, and he was recommended to try his luck when the folks ran for what was called the lucky pit—namely, the *cache*.

Perth now counted the runners as they came in, but could not see Summers. Fifteen had started—fourteen only had come in, and from this number Bill was absent; the truth having been that the faster he ran the more his head spun round, and so incapable was he to guide his steps aright, that he rushed against the parting-rope, and clung to it for an instant for support. Then, finding himself last, he crawled under it and into a thicket, where he trailed himself like a snake along the ground till he found a convenient heap of last year's leaves, and, making a pillow of them, he slept peaceably in a resting-place unknown and unsuspected.

Perth wandered about, dragging his weary limbs —limbs more weary as his hope of finding Summers grew less.

A sudden thought struck him that he would go to the umpires who held the jackets or coats of the runners, and demand from the man who had charge of Bill's the money from the pocket, or such part of it as was due to himself; but more mature deliberation convinced him that he should not be permitted to abstract anything from the pocket, even could he prove that he was entitled to it. He was too tired to try his chance of getting food by a struggle at the lucky pit. He felt so weak that he was convinced he should be thrown down by the first person who ran against him. In this state of body and mind he could not join in the hearty laughter with which the accidents were greeted as one man rolled after another down the hill, where the pit was a confused mass of arms and legs and heads, in which mouths roared for fair play, and hands clutched vainly at the greatest dainties, which some more fortunate possessor held for an instant before it was snatched by some rougher or more tenacious hold.

The old men laughed till they cried; the old women were less hearty in their appreciation of the joke, as they knew how difficult would be the stains of grease and clay to obliterate, and were convinced that the toil would come on them. Yet now the most grumbling dissolved in merry tears, when the

course which had been occupied by the runners was filled by the donkeys and their riders, whose faces were turned to the tails of their beasts, which were bestrode bare-backed—the last arrival at the goal to be considered the winner, and to receive the prize. As neither whip, goad, nor spur was permitted, the riders who were on the best terms with their donkeys had most chance of success, from their being coaxed up to the winning-post. The asses, like other asses, finding something unusual in the aspect of affairs, thought it their duty to mark their disapprobation of things in general, and a good opportunity of obtaining their liberty; which they did like enslaved countries—some by one grand and successful kicking off their riders, others by small and repeated efforts for the same good result. Five minutes after the start the asses galloped about, braying discordant triumph, and their former riders were stretched on the green turf in various positions betokening defeat; but they soon reasserted the right divine of proprietorship, and seizing the truants by their tails, mounted once more, with various fortunes, till the spectators could laugh no longer for very weariness.

"'Tis very good—very kind, surely," said the former speaker amongst the old men, "for Master Elliot to spend his money in this merry-making."

"That's all you know about it," said his neighbour mysteriously. "You don't think he's such

a fool as all that, and no election coming off—nor nothing!"

The old smoker at his side was piqued by this seeming monopoly of information, and would not please the speaker by the expression of any curiosity on the subject. After waiting in vain for an interrogation, the old man said:—

"He've had a heap of money left him, but 'twas said in the will that it was to be all took away from him again if he did not spend five hundred pounds a year in giving dinners to the poor of the parish. So no thanks to him, says I. And there ought to be somebody to look sharp and see it is all spent as it ought to be, and none kept back for that fine miss and hisself."

Such is the disposition of human minds to decry the motives of the good deeds even by which they are themselves benefited.

"Only think!" said the listener, much impressed. "That's the reason they did not give all prime pieces of meat, but the rounds were some of them from the shank end—so mean; but they think angthing will serve poor fellows, and they must wipe their mouths and be thankful."

"And did you see the piece of pudding miss cut for me? I declare the plums were a-holloaing to each other, and could not hear because they were so far off."

"And the wine," said another, "was home-made,

'tis my belief; but for all that, after I had had my glass, I moved down to the other corner of the table, and miss did not see who it was as held out her glass, and that way, a-standing behind the others, I got five bumpers."

"More shame for you, you drunken old hussy!" said one of the men, who envied the quicker wit of the gentler sex. "I'll take very good care to tell the young lady if there's any more *gived* out."

The woman thought that he would know better than to get a neighbour into trouble; not that it would matter much, as she heard the wine was all drunk up.

In the meantime, Sir Edgar and Leah were interrupted in their soft love-murmurs by divers unromantic grunts and snores, and on Sir Edgar's searching at the back of the summer-house, he found Bill Summers extended on, and partly concealed by, the leaves—an animal as uncouth in appearance as the delicate monster who startled the shipwrecked sailors in the island of Prospero. He would not or could not awake, though sundry applications from the toe of the young gentleman, not of the most gentle nature, would have roused any one less bemused in beer. All things have their uses, and Bill Summers, grunting in his drunken slumber, reminded the youthful lovers that there was such a thing as a world beyond that peopled by their day-dreams, beautiful as they were. Leah

remembered that the lengthened shadows told her that her father might probably have returned, and might inquire for her; and Sir Edgar knew—what he had almost forgotten—that there would be a ball that night at which he was to move harmonious measures with Lady Barbara, before a numerous and, he hoped, an admiring multitude of ladies and gentlemen, each of whom would be jealous of the attention the dancers excited, and would painfully and maliciously watch for every awkward angle in his elbows, and every unsteady movement in the sinking and rising of the lady's courtesy. Then he had a half-thought as to whether Lady Barbara would do that step right in the gavotte, about which she had shown herself so obstinate on the previous day; a half-thought only, for the other half was given to the fair creature who moved by his side with timid, unassured steps, but with the natural grace supplied by the proportions of a perfect figure, though her feet committed the sin of moving with their toes forward instead of their heels—an action then thought indispensable to beautiful carriage of the body. When Leah should live with Sir Edgar —whether as wife or mistress he did not then care to decide—he was determined that she should sit with her feet in wooden frames to turn them out duly, and that a dancing-master should give her lessons in the art of standing in the fine positions to produce the desired result.

"Leah, I wish you were to be at the ball to see me dance the minuet to-night," said he, wanting her to be dazzled by the glory of his puce-coloured velvet coat, trimmed with gold lace, his white satin waistcoat, worked with pink silk roses and gold-threaded leaves, and by the cocked hat wherewith so much play was to be made, in the haughty gestures with which it was flung on the ambrosial curls when the lady was cruel, and the profound respect with which it swept the ground when she relented. All this, the result of eighteen months' tuition and incessant practice, Sir Edgar wanted Leah to see and admire; and she was eager to look at the dancers, for she knew that no sooner should she be removed from the charm of his presence, than she should be tormented by jealousy of Lady Barbara. She fancied that Edgar loved her exceedingly, but she saw how formidable was the rivalry of rank and position. Lady Barbara had a right to his homage. He had to go out of his way to bestow any attention on *her*. Leah made no part of his life. She knew that he was like a beautiful tropical bird from the warm south, rich in plumage, and requiring dainty feeding, who came and hovered round her, and perched on her finger, caressing her with his bended neck and half-shut eye, but that she had no right to retain him as her own. He belonged to another climate, and would droop his wings and refuse his food, or beat himself to pieces

against any bars by which she might try to imprison him. But would he not take her to those enchanted regions of warmth and luxury? Should she not be entitled, by the dearest social tie of womanhood, to share every pleasure with her husband?

Even this charming vision had its dark, impenetrable shadow, for in its gloomy depths she fancied her father's form, lonely and helpless, full of deep grief for her desertion, and grave disapprobation of acts which the rest of the world would consider harmless. These reflections bent her head, and filled her eyes with tears, as Sir Edgar pressed her hand, and bade her farewell, at the extremity of the last group of trees which availed for concealment, before she returned home.

In the doorway stood Molly, with her best Sunday cap on, and a new blue ribbon pinned tightly round it to keep it in its place. The last rays of the sun illuminated her face, which was less wrinkled than it had any right to be from her age. But Molly had had originally a smooth, fair face, and a sweet, placid temper had opposed no opposition to the freaks of time or fortune. She bent to the irritations of circumstances without battling against them; and having had neither brilliant beauty in youth, nor gifts of fortune in age, folks did not care to run down one who excited no envy in their minds. Had Molly had a fortune left to her, or had her master chosen to elevate her to the position

of Mrs. Preston, her neighbours would have discovered that she had been "talked about" in her youth, and even would have spoken mysteriously of a certain pond which had been found useful in concealing the indiscretion of that immaculate old woman. But Molly was—

"Secure beneath the storms
Which in ambition's lofty lands are rife."

Her master's asceticism was well known; and Molly was rather an object of commiseration for being compelled to partake his pinching self-denial. She had a smile ready to greet Leah on her return.

"Well, miss, have you enjoyed yourself, my dear? I declare you haven't dirtied your gloves a bit; and only one little tear where the thumb is sewed on in the palm of your hand," as Leah, fearless of the scrutiny, extended both hands towards her. "Well, my dear, was it all very grand? I heard the band playing at a distance, and the bang, bang of the big drum, and the squeaking of the fifes, and I saw all the smart colours moving about, till my eyes dazzled to look at them. I thought I would shut up the house and just take a peep, as master was out; but it was lucky I thought better of it, for just then the scullion's boy came in for six pounds more of seven-shilling tea. He wanted me to make it up in bags for the maids, but says I, 'It must be younger eyes than mine to do that.' Says he, 'There isn't one on um will hunt up the muslin

and needle and thread now they're out in the park, and you've got muslin handy, so you can charge it to master; and shan't I get tongue-banged by them all if I ask them to do it! and Miss Rose is a-waiting too!' Well, I got my spectacles, and run up twenty-four bags; for that young lady is such a sweet creature, that I could not bear to vex her, and so I said. And says he, 'Tis a pity they're not all made alike, then—them young creeters; for there's the one they call Lady Bab—hasn't she been kicking up the devil's delight in the house, 'cause something's wrong with her box from London! Oh! she has a fine temper of her own—a nasty toad! No use to touch my cap to her. *She* takes no notice. Miss Rose always nods her head to me. Says I, the first time I touched my cap to Lady Bab, "She didn't see me;" the second time, "Maybe something innard is a-wexing her, that she don't notice." Says I, "I'll give her one more chance." So I saw her a-looking at me, and I touched my cap, all humble like, and she stared at me as if I was a mad bull. Then says I, "No more civility will you get from me, miss!" And when they asked me to help her box up, the hupper servants being merry-making in the park, says I, "I've got a bone in my leg," and I used it to run away.' 'Then she've got her box?' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'she have; but there is something wrong with what's inside, the scullion said what carried it up-stairs.'"

Sir Edgar stood for a moment or two looking with a cynical smile at Rose's guests. Certainly the supper was not so great a success as the dinner had been. She had taken care that the infirm should be first attended to; and after being fed, she saw them placed carefully in the waggons and conveyed to their homes by the most sober of the carters, who were bribed to their duty by the promise that they should return, and have as much as they could eat and drink when that task was accomplished.

Whilst Rose was thus employed, the spaces which had been occupied by the aged and infirm were refilled immediately by a noisy rabble, who had forced or found their way into the park without the privilege of belonging to the parish. The effort to displace one or two, on the part of the footmen, had created, on one occasion, a pitched battle of several rounds, which occasioned frantic mirth to the lookers-on, and was pronounced to be the best fun of the day. So Rose decided it was better to allow them to remain undisturbed, and cut off the supplies of food and ale.

Sir Edgar looked on and laughed maliciously. He had not forgotten Miss Elliot's unceremonious dismissal of himself, and felt very much like a footman who, having been intending to leave and better himself, receives warning one morning from his mistress, before his plans are ripe for action.

"Miss Elliot," said he, "I saw, when I was last

in town, my friend Hawkins, who had taken a French vessel full of negroes, who had been captured on the Gold Coast, to be carried to one of the French settlements. He was so full of pity for these human cattle, that he had them on deck daily, that they might stretch their limbs and eat their rations of rice in fresh air and comfort; but he found them so utterly unmanageable, so fiercely brutal—the strong seizing the portions of the weak, and the weak striving to circumvent, by fraud, the rights of the strong, that each indulgence ended by the application of the cat to the naked shoulders of the negroes, who were thus flogged back to their lairs."

"Well?" said Miss Elliot, who did not choose to see the application.

"Oh! I only meant that you will want a horse-whip or two here before the grounds are cleared."

It was getting dark now; but, whilst he had been speaking, Rose had seen a pale, thin youth come up to take a place at one of the tables. Before he could reach it, some more nimble candidates had scrambled in and filled up all the spaces, and the sick-looking boy turned away without any further effort, and disappeared under the shadow of the nearest clump of trees: these, however, stood at some distance from any of the tables, and were in a part of the park deserted by the eager revellers. Rose had a bottle half full of the port wine she had been distributing in one hand, and a glass in the other.

She did not feel disposed to devote any more attention to Sir Edgar's caustic speeches, and followed the youth, whom she suspected of being in a state to require assistance. Her search was a long one.

Perth's heart—for it was he—was full of bitterness. He thought he should die, he was so faint; and he would, like an animal, go away to some secluded spot and expire alone.

> "Homeless amongst a thousand homes he stood,
> And near a thousand tables pined and wanted food."

The world was full of hardness and dishonesty. The reckless were fed—the honourable were suffered to starve. Then, when he placed himself in the latter category, he remembered that he owed a shilling, and that he had no money to leave behind him wherewith it could be paid. Leah would pay it, but she had given him all she had—her four shillings and sixpence. He wondered if Hector and Achilles had ever been so faint and hungry as he was then. He should never be able to see the Grecian isles or the plains of Troy now. He did not think he would care to eat anything if he had it at present—he was so sick. Was the daylight all going, that it had grown so dark? And how very cold it had become! The sounds of the laughter and shouts of the men had died away so suddenly! But he must stumble on a little further, to get out of the way of every one. How irritating were these transverse roots of trees!

They were always in the way. There was one more insuperable than the others, and over it Perth could not lift his heavy feet, so he fell forward on his face on the soft turf, already moist with the rising dews of evening.

Rose Elliot was a sensible young woman, and by no means given to extravagant fears; but she was not quite easy when wandering over the loneliest portions of the park after the sunlight had ceased to penetrate between the thick boles of the trees, on an evening when the shadows might be peopled by men half drunken, and not willing to show that respect to her position which she might have claimed as her father's daughter from men in their senses. This feeling made her move cautiously, and she hesitated when she had nearly stumbled over Perth's prostrate body. "Perhaps," she thought, "it were best to leave sleeping lions alone;" but a look at the back of the curly light hair on the head from which the hat had fallen reminded her of the young gardener whom she had watched as he stooped over the flower-beds, and she called him softly, "Perth! Perth Preston!"

Perth had fainted, and heard not the voice of the charmer.

"Perth!" she said, stricken with a sudden terror that it might be some one else. But he made no answer.

She stooped down and touched his hand, and

found it as cold as that of the dead. Then she stood up again, and cried aloud for her servants—"John! Peter! Harry!" And the woodland echoes repeated the softened sounds as the only response. John and Harry were dancing a reel with Lady Barbara's lady's-maid, and Peter was in a state of insensibility as profound as that of Perth, though repletion was the cause in one, and inanition in the other. Then Miss Elliot, thrown on her own resources, remembered the wine-bottle which she had grasped tenaciously in all her wanderings, and, seating herself on the turf by the side of the insensible youth, she managed to drag over his body and place the head on her knees. Perth repaid the efforts made for his benefit by moans, expressive of "Let me alone;" but she raised his head on one arm, and with the right hand filled the glass, and held the wine to his lips. He swallowed some, and she waited patiently for life to return again to his tingling veins. She was full of divine pity for the poor skeleton she was trying to succour. How small those hands had become! how white and feeble since she had seen him carrying the heavy flower-pots for her greenhouse! "He is starved," she said, remembering the story she had heard of his privations, with which she had taunted his father. "I hate that hard old man!"

"Drink the rest of this wine-glassful," she said, "and promise not to move from here till I return."

She was not sure that he understood her, and she returned and knelt down again by his side, and repeated the injunction. "Promise me that you will stay till I come back. I cannot come directly; it will seem long to you, for the house is at some considerable distance. Now do not try to move. I will leave the bottle of wine and the glass. If you feel faint again you must drink some more, but not otherwise. Do you understand?" and he looked at her with large, hollow, wondering eyes, and bowed his head.

CHAPTER XX.

"Love! who lightest on wealth, and makest thy couch in soft cheek of the youthful maiden, and roamest beyond the sea and in rural cots, thee shall neither any of the immortals escape, nor men, the creatures of a day."—SOPHOCLES.

WHEN Sir Edgar had returned to the house, he thought it best to try to propitiate the capricious lady who was to be his partner that night. He had been very happy in the noontide hours spent by the side of Leah, and now he might as well amuse himself in a little coquetry with Lady Barbara. Not that he had any remains of the early devotion to this fascinating creature, to whom every Cantab brought within her influence had bowed down at the university. But Lady Barbara had never cared for him, nor for any other man. What was a well-to-do country gentleman to her, who thought she ought to have princes of the blood-royal at her feet? She considered that the homage offered to her by Sir Edgar and such-like was such as a farmer might be supposed to feel for Miss Elliot—a thing that was not to be thought of twice. But for that conviction, she might have been brought to

consider favourably a young man possessed of personal attractions so great as those which adorned Sir Edgar. Now it happened that princes royal probably felt the attractions of ladies in their own sphere, or if such Jupiters, or other inhabitants of Olympus, ever descended to meaner charms, they did it in disguise, and with other purposes than marriage. So that princes, and even dukes and earls, had not hitherto thrown themselves at the feet of Lady Barbara, though she had reached to the age of twenty-seven, without an offer she had considered worth a second thought.

However, there was no reason why she should not coquet a little, just to keep herself in practice, and with this good intention she had been going to meet Sir Edgar when she heard of the arrival of her box of millinery from town. The arrival of this box had been the one point of interest in Lady Barbara's life for some days past, and on hearing the sound of lumbering feet in the ante-room to her bed-chamber, she went in with steps alert and sparkling eyes to see the new dress, and—

"Hail'd in her heart the triumph yet to come."

When she opened the door she perceived the retreating petticoats of the scullion and laundry-maid, who had volunteered to perform the duty of conveying the box to the lady's chamber, from sympathy with the dancing maid, whose delinquencies

they wished to screen; but more than that they did not feel themselves equal to perform, and running down as fast as they could, they avoided receiving any more orders from the haughty lady, and were deaf to the repeated peals of the bell. Moreover, as they after alleged in their own defence, that bell didn't ring kitchen-ways. Why should it?

Lady Barbara looked at the cord-bound package as a desponding general who invests an impregnable city looks at its defences. She tried to untie the knotted cord, but it hurt her fingers, and she left off directly. She had no knife in her room stronger than the penknife in her gold-mounted dressing-case, and with this she essayed to sever the tough rope, but the finely-tempered steel broke at the first attempt. She stamped her small foot—no one heard it; she pulled the bell again, and broke the wire, and then, in a flaming passion, she flounced into the morning-room which led into her bedroom, with a flush on her face and a fire in her eyes which might, but for that fatal mouth, have made her handsome.

Sir Edgar was there, looking very cool and tranquil, and bowed to the ground when he saw the ruffled lady. When one is angry the relief is enormous to abuse some one, and the least cowardly way, of course, is to abuse the absent, especially when there are no defenders present.

"I never in my life," said the lady, "knew such a surprising fool as Miss Elliot. This feast to the

lower classes is a perfect outrage on the rights of social life. It has set the folks all mad. I can get no servant to answer my bell, though I have rung without ceasing for the last half-hour, and now——"

"Is there anything I can do for you, madam? You can have no servant so devoted as myself. Do you require water? I will go to the well and draw it, if cold is required. Do you desire it hot? I will penetrate to the fountain that hangs on the kitchen fire, and fill a jug, even at the chance of incurring that caudal appendage with which intruders into those regions are disgraced. If you want wine I will break open the sideboard; if fruit, I will pilfer from the hothouses. Speak but your will, and it shall be obeyed."

"My box is come from Stoneham, and I can't get it open, the cord is so tiresome," said the lady.

"Is that all? I will undo it immediately. Where is it?"

"Oh! but," said the lady coquettishly, "I cannot think what is to be done. It is in the turret-room to my bed-chamber, and I could not think of admitting you there."

Sir Edgar smiled. He was, as a rule, too well bred ever to distort his face by a laugh which might exceed the Chesterfieldian regulation expression of amusement. He knew the lady would admit him, and he did not care to press it. He could wait for the favour for which he was not impatient. She

was worried by his seeming indifference, and wanted to see the contents of her box.

"Well, I suppose you must come, as I can get no one else," said the lady.

Sir Edgar presented his hand, bowing low, and the pair passed through the bedroom, and then into the turret-room, in which there was a small bed usually occupied by the lady's-maid. It was situated in the turret of the tower which flanked that side of the house, and the window, a narrow slit for arrows in former days, was nearly covered by the clustering ivy, and in that declining light did not illuminate objects sufficiently to please the eager inspector of the contents of her box.

"You must lift it carefully and bring it to my room," said she.

Sir Edgar obeyed, giving a look, as he left the turret, at the little bed usually occupied by Bell.

"Of what are you thinking?" said the lady.

"Of that small bed which I used to occupy when I came here in the holidays, and the house was full of guests. Why had I not prophetic dreams of one who would murder sleep?"

"I shall do that to-night as regards Bell. She will not enjoy much rest, I imagine. But do come away from there," she continued, "for you talk frightful nonsense."

Sir Edgar was leaning out of the window, and

looking down to the ground below—"Why do you choose to sleep at such an elevation?" inquired he.

"The room is more cheerful than the one just under it," replied the lady.

"It would serve you rightly," said Sir Edgar, "if I were to threaten to fling myself out unless you withdrew the cruel negative that wrecked my hopes two years since."

Lady Bab laughed, and quoted the celebrated lines—

> "'When he drew near, observing how steep
> The sides did appear, and the bottom how deep,'" &c.

"'Tis very high, and you may repent your cruelty one day, and have to fling yourself out to avoid the recollection of it. No one could escape crushing from such a height."

The lady took the dress from its intricate transverse bars of tape, and placed it on the bed.

"How very beautiful!" exclaimed the beau, who had experience enough to appreciate the expense which must have been incurred in putting the dress together, and the delicate beauty of the material, which was of pink crape over white satin. The crape was worked in elaborate flowers formed of different-sized imitation pearls, which had been made at Rome especially at Lady Barbara's order.

"If there be any pleasure which I deserve in return for breaking my nails in undoing that cord, seeing you adorn that dress will be reward enough."

"Very civil, indeed," said Lady Barbara; "but you must go at once, and I must try it on—or how can I tell it will fit to-night?—and, good heavens! how shall I try it on without my maid?"

"I fear I am not qualified for that office, madam," returned Sir Edgar gravely. "Can I seek for Bell anywhere?"

"Oh! how can I tell where she is? Somewhere out in the park. You will be ages finding her. Is there not a single woman left in the house?"

"I fear not one. I saw Miss Bruce wandering amongst the revellers as I came in, like the lady in 'Comus;' and I behaved 'like a brother,' and left her fair side all unguarded."

"Well, go away; I must try to get it on in the best way I can."

"May I not see the result?"

"Yes, if 'tis successful—but do go now;" and Sir Edgar went.

In the meantime, Miss Bruce—whose senses had been shocked in various ways by sights and sounds disagreeable to a well-conducted young woman, who had been asked for kisses by drunken men, and told she was not "much to look at," nor so young as she had been, by those who were more in their senses—had wandered back to the house. She expected that she should spend great part of the day with Mr. Elliot, whilst the rest of the household were absent, but that wary old fox had ordered a sufficiency

of cold provisions and wine in his own library, to which no one was allowed to penetrate, unless by particular desire. Miss Bruce could not go uninvited, and had received no permission. Mr. Elliot never even gave her the opportunity of offering her services by ringing his bell. Thus, weary of solitude when others were social, and of dulness when others were amused, she had wandered out, and dissatisfied, wandered back, just as Sir Edgar had emerged from Lady Barbara's bedroom.

Presently an impatient cry was heard to proceed from the lady's chamber.

"Sir Edgar!" said the fair one, putting out her head, and a throat adorned with a frilled dressing-gown, "you *must* find me a woman to try on my dress."

"Miss Bruce is here, if Venus will employ one of the Graces to adorn her," said he, bending gracefully to the governess, and looking sweetly in her face, as he feared, with good reason, she would rebel at the proposed service.

"Certainly," said Miss Bruce, with an awkwardness which made a ludicrous comment on Sir Edgar's compliment.

"I really would not trouble you, Miss Bruce, but the dress must be tried on if I am to wear it to-night, and I certainly shall not appear without it."

Her ladyship said this with the air of a Juno who

had stolen one of Jove's thunderbolts, and had threatened to hurl it on the guilty world.

Sir Edgar, who wished to display his fine person in the minuet, looked, as he really was, concerned. Miss Bruce hated the lady, as she thought her arrival had destroyed a promising chance of her securing Sir Edgar for her husband; and she would have rejoiced sincerely at any accident which prevented Lady Barbara's appearance that night. However, she went into the bed-chamber, and in the course of twenty minutes she came out with a malicious smile on her face. She passed Sir Edgar without speaking, but he judged that there was some trouble about the dress yet unknown to him.

When Miss Bruce had retired altogether to a retreat from which she hoped no one would dislodge her to assist the great lady in her dilemma, Sir Edgar stepped up to the door, and begged to know whether he might be allowed to judge of the effect of the dress when on. Lady Barbara opened the door, and said in a troubled voice, in which there were latent tears—

"'Tis so provoking, the dress does not fit."

"Not fit?"

"No, and if it were too large one might pin it over, but it will not meet by three-quarters of an inch."

"Surely that might be rectified by a needle and thread—somehow by cutting it open and putting in

a bit. I don't understand; but a sempstress might do it."

"Of course she might. I asked that stupid governess, and she replied that there was but one in the neighbourhood; and though she took in needlework, she was incapable of altering such a delicate material; that her fingers were rough, and would catch in the crape; moreover, that her father would not allow her to leave home to go out to work; and, in addition to this, Miss Bruce observed the men might not come in for another hour, and who was to fetch her, even on the chance of her coming?"

"What reward might I claim," said the gentleman, "if I become your messenger, and ask the needlewoman to come—if I compel her attendance, that I may not be deprived of the delight and honour of appearing as your partner for *one* evening, though you have for ever deprived me of all hope of devoting the whole of my life to your service?"

"Pray go without any more delay. Tell the woman I will pay her any charge she may make, either reasonable or unreasonable. You had better add that she can sleep here. She will have to work late before the dress can be finished. Now go."

CHAPTER XXI.

"Now friendly Pity, full of tender sighs,
Halts on her tongue, but softens in her eyes."

Leaving Sir Edgar to consider the best way of carrying out his own wishes that Leah should see the ball, and Lady Barbara's that Leah should alter her dress, we will return to Rose Elliot, whom we left walking swiftly towards the house to obtain some food for Perth. She did not fancy that which had been hacked about by unknown knives, and touched by profane fingers, but she proceeded at once to the supper-room, the key of which she knew where to find, and abstracted a chicken, some slices of ham, and some bread. To this she added a plate-full of sandwiches, and, after feeling in her pocket for her purse, she returned to the tree where she had left Perth. She called to him softly, for the gloom filled her with awe and dread of some unknown evil. He answered not, and, feeling her way carefully, she came to the tree under which he had originally fallen, and on putting out her hand it touched his face. This time his insensibility had arisen from sleep, and not from fainting. The unaccustomed

fluid had ascended to his brain, taken as it had been without any solid food.

He awoke, however, at hearing his name repeated clearly, and sat up, seeing only through the dim shadow a white figure with flowing hair. It reminded him in the darkness of his sister's visit to him in the stable, and his lips formed the word "Leah!"

"It is not Leah," said a gentle voice. "It is Miss Elliot. Listen! I have brought you some food. Take these first," giving him the sandwiches; "eat them slowly, and you will feel better. Now tell me what I can do for you. Shall I go to Mr. Preston and ask him to receive you at home?"

"No, I thank you, madam," replied the youth in a feeble voice, but trying to rise as he found by whom he had been addressed.

"Sit still, and tell me quietly. What do you mean to do?"

"Go away and work for myself a great way off, where no one will know me."

Rose wondered whether he had come to the feast in hopes of obtaining food; but she did not like to inquire in so many words.

"Did you come here to-day to see your sister?"

"No, madam. I sold my best suit of clothes to a young man who came here to-day, and I followed him in the hope of getting the money of which he defrauded me; but I could not catch him, though I saw him afar off."

"Then you did not get the money you expected?"

"No, madam; I feel so ill that I don't seem to care much—not even for the food you have been so kind as to bring me."

"You will be better to-morrow—nearly well, I dare say. Go to one of the barns on the house-farm; they are empty now. Take some straw and sleep till to-morrow. There is some money—not much, but it will help you on your way; and now God bless you!"

Perth tried to speak, but only inarticulate sounds came for a few instants. Miss Elliot kindly returned to catch his meaning.

"If, madam, you would take back one of these shillings, and ask my sister to pay Mr. Reece for a book? I have the receipt for eighteen-pence already paid on it in my pocket. There! I have wrapped the shilling up in it. I hope you will believe I am grateful. I don't seem to be able to say it aright."

"Yes, I quite believe it," said the lady softly, and went away; but returned, with an injunction well befitting her practical character: "Keep the chicken for your breakfast; the sandwiches are as much as you ought to eat to-night. Keep the half-bottle of wine also." And she went away, and Perth strained his weak sight to watch the white drapery that shrouded her figure through the darkness, till she disappeared, and he saw her no more.

CHAPTER XXII.

"The proverb holds that to be wise and love
Is hardly granted to the gods above;
A general doom on all mankind is pass'd,
And all are fools and lovers, first or last."

DRYDEN.

WHEN Rose returned to the house, with the light spirit of one who had dispensed happiness and rejoices in the conviction, she met Sir Edgar walking out with a perplexed countenance.

"What is it?" said Rose, who was the person ever referred to to untangle domestic knots.

"Oh, Miss Preston!—Miss Elliot, I would have said — here is Lady Barbara, like Wordsworth's Betty, 'in a great quandary.'"

"Indeed! What is wrong?"

"She has sent me to fetch Miss Preston to alter her ball-dress; and though I am not a coward, I flatter myself, I do certainly shrink from receiving 'no' for an answer from that puritanical old prig, the Methodist-parson father. Is there no one who could go in my place?"

"I am ashamed of you," said Rose. "You want to obtain favour from the lady, and you grudge a

little inconvenience to obtain it. What is the real difficulty?—a tight boot, or do you want to have your hair recurled before the ball, and grudge the time?"

"It is not either of these reasons; but it is so odd an errand for a gentleman not yet having attained years of discretion, that I do not think I should succeed if I went alone. Now, if you would accompany me and bell the cat!"

"The cat! Ah! what recollections must crowd on your mind at that name! I wonder you ventured to remind me of your swollen nose and disfigured face by the mention of that animal, that little cause of a disastrous combat."

"You are very severe, Miss Elliot"—and inwardly, "What an infernally disagreeable girl she is!"—"but I can put up with your taunts if you will give me the pleasure of your company, and induce Leah Preston to come and arrange Lady Bab's dress for the evening."

"Well, I don't mind. I have a little commission to execute myself with that young woman, and we will go together. I saw her to-day near one of the tables, but I did not attend to her much. Poor girl! she looked too refined for the surrounding crowd, and altogether out of place."

"She is rather good-looking," said Sir Edgar, "is she not?"

"Good-looking! Why, she is beautiful!" was

the honest tribute of the heiress to the charms of the needlewoman.

"She is a nice girl, taking her all in all," was the amended comment of the baronet to himself. "I suppose she is very rustic, like the rest of the cottagers," continued the crafty youth, who wanted to talk of Leah, and to obtain Rose's opinion.

"By no means, I should imagine, though I know little about her; but my father heard from Lord North, when Mr. Preston first came to this neighbourhood, that his late gardener was a highly educated man, and had married the beautiful daughter of a gentleman, whose family had discarded her for the misalliance. He left Lord North's service, in the hope that a residence in a milder climate might prolong her life. There is a great deal in race; and Leah's delicacy and charm of appearance probably come from the high-bred mother."

Thus they talked till they reached the boundary of the park, when Miss Elliot left him and went softly up to the cottage, where there was but one glimmering light shining through the ivy-covered window; and, as that was upstairs, she concluded that the inmates were, with one exception, in bed.

When Molly had concluded her amount of limited information, she asked various questions, and had rejoiced in Dick Crozier's success at first, but was afterwards fearful that it might make him too proud

for his work. No doubt Mrs. Crozier would come in next day, and crow over her finely about it, saying what a comfort sons are.

"I don't think it no disgrace to be a single woman—do you, Miss Leah?"

"No, indeed, Molly," said Leah.

"Not but that you are sure to be married, my dear—so well to look at as you are. And then the Leah in the Bible was married; not that *that* ever seemed to be a comfortable way of going on, for one man to marry two sisters. But they were a nasty race, them Jews—stiff-necked, and wonderful dirty, I reckon, or Moses wouldn't have made such a rout about their keeping themselves clean. Anyhow, no man can marry a sister of yours and you too, 'cause you haven't got one; unless your papa was to marry again, and that's not likely. Hark! there's master come in. Won't you take off your nice gown, Miss Leah, and come down and take your supper with your pa? He can't be in yet, for he've got the pony to feed and bed-up. No Master Perth now, poor boy! Master may go further and fare worse before he gets such a servant again as Perth was!"

Leah considered for a moment whether she should remain, and show herself boldly in her new dress, and decided that it would be cowardly and deceitful to change it, according to Molly's recommendation. So she put the bread and cheese and the cold meat, which had been kept for Mr. Preston, and the cup

of milk, by the side of the plate, and waited with beating heart for the approach of her father.

He came in with a heavy footstep, and she knew he was tired and depressed. He smiled feebly at his darling when he saw the preparations she had made for his supper, and sat down before it, but evidently with little appetite. His preoccupied mind took no notice of Leah's simple white dress; probably it looked to him like a dressing-gown, in which, in former years, he had seen his wife during her last illness.

Leah asked nothing of the result of his journey; he would tell her if he chose it. He had nothing cheering to relate, and was silent. No one knew anything of Perth's present locality. Caleb found out where he had lodged, and heard from the mistress how good and quiet a youth he was; but she spoilt the praise by adding that he was always studying outlandish books.

"Poor lost boy!" was the ejaculation of his father on hearing this.

"Ah, sir! if he's lost, you had better try to find him. Good sons ain't plentiful, and he is a thorough good one."

Then Caleb Preston went to the grocer, who stuck to the story of the owing half-crown, though there was a look in his face which made the shrewd north-countryman doubt his veracity. He did not doubt Perth's having had the book, but he suspected

there was something wrong in the story of the payment.

Miss Elliot's eagerness to succeed in her mission induced her to infringe the laws of good breeding by reconnoitring the position before she attacked it. In other words, she looked in at the window she passed in going through the small portion of the garden in front of the house, and saw Caleb's weary face sitting over his scarcely-tasted supper, and the graceful head of his daughter, illumined by a single candle. Old Molly stood at the back of Mr. Preston's chair, to remove the remains of the meal previous to going to her bed.

Rose had some unpleasant memories of the heat with which she had spoken to the preacher when they last met, and feared that he might show his resentment now by refusing to allow his daughter to come to the Hall. She could not guess that the father, outwardly so rigid, loved the charming creature for the warmth with which she had espoused the cause of his truant son, and that he looked up at her with a kind of hope that she might be come to give him information about Perth of which he was ignorant.

It was, therefore, with a chill of disappointment that he heard her state her request that Miss Preston should come to the Hall, and exert her skill in fitting Lady Barbara's new dress. His first feeling was to decline; but, as he looked at his

daughter's face, he saw in it such an expression of joy and hope so vivid, that his heart melted.

"Poor girl!" he said to himself, "I may have been too rigid to Perth. Let me not interpose a dense shadow on the sunshine, which does not come often on her young life."

He saw objections, however, and uttered them:—

"How long, madam, do you think my daughter's services will be required? I could escort her to the Hall, but I should not choose that she should return home alone, considering the state of the park at present."

"Lady Barbara desired me to say," replied the young lady, "that Miss Preston should have a bed at the Hall to-night, as it must be uncertain at what time the dress will be completed."

The father looked troubled. His child had never yet slept a single night from the shelter of his roof.

"We will take good care of her," said the young lady, smiling. "I will answer for her safety."

"Alas! madam, her safety must be confided to a stronger arm, and a more watchful eye, than even your own—to that Being who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, and who is mighty to save all those who call upon Him earnestly, and with a faithful heart."

"Then trust her to Him," said Miss Elliot gravely, "and let your faith in His protection be shown in this matter. Leah, will you come?"

"If my father will permit," said Leah, looking at him anxiously.

"Yes, Leah, you shall go," said Mr. Preston. "Surely you have not come alone?" he added suddenly.

"No; I have a friend waiting for me in the park."

"Then," continued Mr. Preston, "I will remain till Leah is ready, and walk with her to the Hall door, from which moment I shall consider her under your charge."

The father and daughter had risen on Miss Elliot's first entrance, and now made respectful adieux. Then Leah went up with Molly to put her night-clothes together.

"'Twas lucky you had not taken off your pretty dress, miss. Now you are all ready to see the great lady. I hope she won't show her nasty tempers to you. But I hope you will behave pretty, and remember that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath.'"

"That will do, Molly; I shall have enough of that going along with papa," said Leah impatiently, for she could not find her scissors, and was in a hurry. But, being ashamed of her short-lived irritability, she laughed and kissed Molly, saying, "You see it is not only titled ladies who have nasty tempers. Good night, old dear! If I work very fast, perhaps I may see the dancing, and Sir Edgar, and all the beautiful ladies."

Mr. Preston was greatly troubled at the evidences of original, unredeemed sin which met him at every step. There came on his ear fragments of songs which were meaningless to the pure-minded girl that moved by his side, but which filled her father with disgust. Men trying to rise from the ground in vain, and sinking back in the helplessness of inebriation, were frequently in their path; and they passed close to one prostrate form, and took care not to tread on the sleeper, believing him to be, like the others, a victim to intoxication, when they were unconscious that one had passed a brother and the other a son.

Perth had felt too feeble to find his way to the barn, as Miss Elliot had recommended—too tired, for the walk he had taken in coming from Stoneham, and the efforts he had made to find Bill Summers, had exhausted a frame weakened by starvation.

Thus, after he had finished the sandwiches, he felt comforted, and believed that he might sleep without damage through the dark hours of that warm summer night. So soon as morning came, he would go to the place where he had hidden his bundle, and go away for years, or for ever. He thought all this dimly, and slept again.

It was late when Leah reached the Hall, and she was shown at once to the bed-chamber of Lady Barbara, who was in a tremor of impatience for the

arrival of the workwoman. She had indulged in a scene of such violence against her maid, that Bell, who had received offers of marriage from each of the footmen, had returned railing for railing; the waiting-woman's tongue having been loosed from long bondage by imbibing the best part of a bottle of red port—a tender attention on the part of John the footman. She dismissed herself then and there from the service of Lady Barbara, fully expecting a bribe from the great lady to return to her duty.

"I should like to know who she will get to put on the stockings to those sharp, bony toes of hers, or to put the pearl-powder on to the back of her neck over her ugly yellow skin!" Bell said in her wrath, addressing Miss Elliot's maid, as she left the presence of her mistress, who had the mortification of hearing the observation. When Leah, therefore, was ushered into the presence of the lady, she found her inclined to be sweet, to the point of caressingness. Leah took off her hat and produced her work-basket, and was soon immersed in the difficulties of considering how the dress could be let out so as to admit of Lady Barbara's wearing it. Leah asked to see the box in which it had travelled; and at the bottom of it, partly concealed by the pieces of silver paper which had fallen over from the sides, she found what she had expected—one or two small pieces of crape and satin; bits which artful dressmakers roll up and return to the owners,

as if to assure them that every atom of the charged-for number of yards has been used in the fabrication of the dresses ordered, reserving to themselves a yard or two, of no consequence except to themselves, according to their own view of the case. The bits returned were on this occasion very useful. Whether Lady Barbara had grown stouter under the influence of country air and feeding, or whether the dressmaker had mistaken the measurement, the result was the same—she could not get into the dress as it was; and Leah's nimble fingers rectified the blunder so well that, when the dress was fitted on a second time, her ladyship was delighted by the appearance she presented.

"There!" she said triumphantly, looking lovingly at her reflection in the glass. "I wonder what Sir Edgar will think of that!"

Then, turning to the timepiece on the chimney-shelf, she told Leah, who had been unpleasantly affected by the lady's unconscious query, that she must get her some hot water from the kitchen, and help her to dress. Bell had been so very insolent, Miss Preston must take her place for this night at least.

Leah had a half-hope of getting a glimpse of Sir Edgar if she descended into other regions, so she went willingly; but it was some time before she could get any vessel to carry the hot water, every jug and tin can having been carried into the park

for the benefit of the beer-drinkers. She succeeded at length, but did not see Sir Edgar. He was in his room, his once-flowing curls pinned up in paper, awaiting the application of the tongs, whilst he contemplated the rich suit laid out on the bed, and smiled as he anticipated the triumph of the night.

"I wish she would talk about him a little more," thought Leah, as she poured out the water for her ladyship's ablutions.

The lady was in high good temper with Leah, whose cleverness had got her out of a difficulty, and had enabled her to appear in added beauty and magnificence that night.

"Did you see any one as you went for the water?"

"No, madam."

"Ah! I thought you might have seen Sir Edgar hanging about my room. He was so very anxious about my dress; and he would have been so relieved to know that it was rectified, and that I was certain of appearing to-night."

Leah was silent; and though she would have given much to hear more, she was too respectful to ask questions.

The lady had been evidently accustomed to talk to her maid, and rather enjoyed a fresh auditor, who could not but delight to hear of the lady's conquests for the first time, when Bell had been

obliged to bear the infliction of their repetition so often.

"Sir Edgar is a fine-looking gentleman," Leah uttered at last.

"Well enough. Some more cold water to that. Why, child! do you want to scald me like a pig?"

Leah added the water.

"Now scrub the back of my neck. This fashion of having the hair down is detrimental to the beauty of the throat, I think. Sir Edgar says I have the most graceful throat he ever saw, and as slender as Anne Boleyn's."

"Your ladyship has known Sir Edgar some time?" queried Leah.

"Oh, my dear Miss Preston, he has been devotedly attached to me ever since he first saw me at Cambridge, two years since! Then he threw himself and his fortune at my feet, and swore he would never marry so long as my single state permitted him to hope that my determination was revocable."

"And did your ladyship say 'No,' then?" said Leah, wondering that any woman, even a princess, should say "No" to her Edgar.

"Of course I did," said Lady Bab carelessly.

"And—does he love you still?" Leah gasped out.

"Love me! Of course he does. If you could have heard *all* he said to me in this room——

Where's the comb? the dressing-gown? Let down my hair, and brush it. If you could have heard the tender protestations of devotion, the terror he felt at the chance of my not dancing with him to-night, you would not longer feel any doubt on the subject."

"No; only," sighed poor Leah, "folks did say he was engaged to Miss Elliot."

"And so he was," said the lady; "but he broke with her for my sake only; and this but a few days since."

Leah revived. It might have been for her sake that the rupture had been made.

"It was not an hour since," Lady Barbara continued, "that he threatened, if I would not listen to his suit, to fling himself out of this window, which would be certain death, from its distance to the ground."

"Was he in *this* room with your ladyship?" said Leah, scared at what seemed to her the impropriety of the fact.

Lady Barbara coloured.

"Oh yes! Ladies who have lived abroad are not so particular as those strait-laced prudes in England. You need not look so frightened. When I am dressed I shall send for him to judge of the effect, and to fasten my bracelets on. You may go into the turret-room and listen to what he says, if you have any doubt of his devotion to me."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Dresses laughed at in our forefathers' wardrobes and pictures, when by the circulation of time and vanity they are brought about, we think becoming."—*Government of the Tongue.*

Whilst Lady Barbara discoursed Leah was trying to fasten the hook of the satin dress. This accounted for the deep flush on her face, doubtless, when she raised her head again. The lady turned herself first one side and then the other, to see the effect of the glittering material before it should be dimmed by the pink crape.

"Very becoming to my figure," was the satisfied observation. "He says I've the smallest waist he ever—saw," the lady added; but her attendant knew she had only exchanged a more prudent termination for a truer one. "I am ready now for the crape dress. Take care it does not catch in the gold tiara," for Lady Barbara's head was dressed in the Grecian fashion, which came in with the French Revolution, when men affected heads like Brutus, and ladies those of Diana. This style of adornment had not before penetrated into the wilds of Essex, and Lady Barbara expected to make a sensation therewith.

Leah, who was rich in the quantity of her own flowing tresses, saw with astonishment two crisply-curled locks taken from a box, which, by the lady's direction, were fastened at the back of her head by the braid which Leah had previously plaited.

When the crape dress had been carefully put on and fastened, the lady desired Leah to retire to the turret-room till she called her. When the door had been closed carefully and fastened by the mistress, she proceeded to take a small packet from the recesses of her dressing-case, and in an instant of time a delicate bloom arose on her olive-tinted cheek, which added roundness to its contour, and gave renewed brilliancy to her eyes.

"Now for the bracelets," said Lady Barbara. "Those men must have returned from their frolicking by this time;" and she rang the bell, which was promptly answered. "Is Sir Edgar dressed?"

"Yes, my lady. He is in the ball-room with Miss Elliot. The guests are arriving."

"Send Sir Edgar to me."

The footman withdrew, and the lady retired to her room, where, standing before the glass in a position in which she received the whole brilliant illumination of the wax-lights, she waited till she heard the step of her former lover in the next room.

"Come here, Sir Edgar; I want you to see my dress!" and the young man passed into the room.

"Alas, madam!" he cried with an accent of expostulation, "why will you tempt me to repeat the expression of an admiration which may never bear fruit? Why allow me the favour of gazing unrestrainedly on beauty so dazzling—unless, indeed, you will withdraw the one word of two letters which doomed me to despair?"

"Indeed, Sir Edgar," said the lady coquettishly, "I cannot believe that you have been very unhappy in my refusal. Come, confess, whilst you fasten this bracelet, that you have seen fairer women since those happy days when we strolled together up and down those broad lime-shadowed walks of Trinity gardens?"

"When I challenged Crawford, of St. John's," said Sir Edgar, smiling, "for setting his terrier on your poodle."

"And Mr. Crawford came and apologised to *me*," said the lady, "and led the terrier by a string, to be dealt with according to my royal will and pleasure."

"Ah! you drove us all to destruction *in those days;*" and then, seeing a shadow coming on the fair one's brows at the specified time, he felt he had blundered, and hastened to add, "And the years that have since passed have given even a richer glow to your charms, a more intense expression to your mobile features;" and as Sir Edgar said this he felt its truth, and spoke with the earnestness of conviction.

Leah, with her throbbing head resting against the door, heard the words and the tone. Had her lover become faithless to her in thought?

In truth, some drops of the old poison seemed to circulate through his veins when he knelt to fasten the jewelled band on to the round pliant arm, and felt the touch of the velvety skin.

"Those who admire fair women," says Burke, "are attracted by the eye, the captives to olive beauties are swayed by the touch;" yet Sir Edgar had no idea of subjecting himself to the chance of another refusal by any talk beyond the exaggerated gallantry to which Lady Bab had been accustomed, and by which he meant nothing beyond the amusement of the passing hour. He would not on any account have made the lady less cruel, in fact. But it suited him that he should appear to a numerous and delighted assembly on the best possible terms with the wealthiest and most fashionable lady of rank who would grace the meeting by her presence. The fact of his engagement to Miss Elliot had been well understood in the county. The fact of her indifference to him was patent. It was, therefore, important to Sir Edgar, as a vain man, to show that he was the chosen suitor of a lady so admired, and so rich in adventitious circumstances, as Lady Barbara; and having little dread that she would really wish to marry him, he played with the danger, the extent of which he did not estimate.

The love he felt for his innocent wood-nymph was of a purer nature, and more unmixed with earth's alloy, but it was removed from the tenor of his daily life. "At Rome one must do as the Romans," thought the youth. No doubt old Numa felt this when he returned to the dust-defiled dames of Rome after his vows paid to his spotless divinity of the fountain, in her cool moss-covered cavern, sweet with the scent of wild flowers, and melodious with songs of birds. Had Sir Edgar been obliged to choose then and there for the rest of his life between Leah and Lady Barbara, knowing that the decision was irrevocable, he would have taken the single diamond of the purest water—his village girl; but he did not feel that this was the case. The diamond could be taken up at any time; and now, being about to appear on a stage before a large assembly, mock jewels of imposing size would produce a far more magnificent effect, and for the loan of these jewels he was now negotiating.

"Now for the turquoise bracelet," said the lady, holding out the other hand. "But why so silent and thoughtful, Sir Edgar?"

"I was thinking, madam, that whilst you will be the sole object of my thoughts, and the only creature in the gay assembly who will entrance my senses, you will divide your smiles between many, and turn those radiant eyes on hundreds

who have not the claim of old devotion to put forth for your favour. Give me some pledge that I may be consoled, should I see some happier man leading you away to the dance, whilst I am left devoured by envy at his greater success. Let me feel that the gloved hand, which yields to the pressure of his, has received a token of warmer homage from my lips—lips once so greatly blessed!"

Lady Barbara tried to blush, and, at all events, she contrived to turn aside her graceful head and look down. Sir Edgar kissed her hand, and rising to his feet suddenly, repeated the osculation on her lips.

"How dare you?" said the lady, with real or feigned indignation.

The previous conversation and the following pause betrayed the truth to the unhappy Leah.

"Pardon me, Lady Barbara! the recollections of the past were too potent—the temptation of the present too irresistible;" and he threw an expression of the deepest depression into his handsome face.

"I have a great mind to say that I will not dance with you to-night," said the lady, seeming to pout.

"That would punish the whole assembly for the fault of one," replied the gentleman. "Hundreds are expecting the delight of seeing your graceful performance in the minuet. Hark! the musicians are tuning their instruments; the guests have

arrived. Will you not come? Allow me to conduct you."

"No, go first, and I will follow you. I really do not mean to commit myself by walking alone with you into the room," replied the lady.

Sir Edgar bowed and retired, and then Lady Barbara remembered, when she wanted the curl at the back of her head refastened, displaced as it had been by Sir Edgar's arm in the stolen caress, that Leah had been a prisoner in the turret-room during the whole of her conversation with Sir Edgar.

"Well, it does not very much matter," she thought, remembering the rather compromising nature of the interview. "I shall end by accepting him; unless, indeed, anything very much better should offer this evening. After all, he is young, handsome, and moderately rich. I can afford to indulge myself in my fancy for this boy. It is strange that, with my rank, beauty, and wealth, I have not had a better offer, during ten years of being before all the fashion of town, and of all the watering-places."

She unlocked the door, but did not at first see Leah stretched on the bed, as Leah's dress was white, as was the coverlet.

"Are you tired or ill?" said Lady Barbara, who had no sympathy with fatigue which she never incurred, or with sickness which she had never felt.

Leah started up. The darkness of the room concealed her red eyelids and tear-stained cheeks.

"No, madam. Can I assist you in any way?"

"Another pin in the back hair. See if those ringlets are firm."

Leah followed her to the toilette-table, and arranged the curls to her satisfaction.

"Now," said Lady Barbara, "give me that fan. I am ready. I shall not require you again till one or two o'clock to-morrow morning. If you find some of the servants, I dare say they will take care of you. You may manage to see some of the dancing if you get into the gallery."

She whisked out of the room, the pearl trimming being dashed against the door-sill as she disappeared. The weighty clusters of glittering beads gave peculiar grace to the crape folds which hung round her slender figure, giving full justice to the highly-proportioned limbs.

"Oh, she is really beautiful!" cried poor Leah; "and he loves her, and he has been making a fool of me ever since I was so wretched as to see him. Oh, Sir Edgar! how could you be so cruel?" Then she longed to tell him that he should not deceive her any longer—that she knew all his double dealing. "Oh, father!" she cried, apostrophising Caleb Preston in thought, "I ought to have confided my weakness to your strength. I have concealed my steps from you, and they have been backsliding, and now I wander in outer darkness. Alas! I shall never see the dawn of happiness again."

She felt that any place would be less painful than Lady Barbara's bedroom, where the love-scene had occurred between her and Leah's faithless lover. There were three doors in the room; one led to the back-stairs, one to the turret-room, and one into the ante-room, through which Sir Edgar and Lady Barbara had proceeded to the ball-room.

Leah did not venture to go into the ante-room. "She had no business amongst ladies or gentlemen," she said, gulping down her tears. She turned to go down the back-stairs; but they led up as well as down, and on the top stood a dark, stout man, crying "Hi!" to Leah as soon as he saw her. "I am distress," said he, in broken English. "My score is wrong. I want paper, I want ink, and the plume. I cannot find any in this cursed great house."

Leah told him to wait whilst she fetched some. She had seen ink and writing materials in the turret-room, and she carried the bottle and a pen to him as he stood on the stairs. The harp-player belonging to the band engaged to play for the ball took the ink from Leah's hand. He was struck with her pure delicate beauty, and the tint of her skin, so unlike that of his countrywomen. She looked like a lady; but if so, why was she on the back-stairs?

"You go dance, mees?" he said.

Leah shook her head.

"You like music? You come hear me play—see dancing. I play the harp. Oh! butiful!"

Leah said, "Thank you," and repaid the proffer by a smile. He beckoned her to follow him, and on reaching the top of the stairs, they went through a passage which led on to a gallery built over the ball-room. Here Leah hung back, for a great number of musicians were occupied in tuning their instruments, and she saw no place for herself. Senhor Monçada, however, placed a chair for her behind the curtain which flanked the orchestra, and next to himself and his harp.

Luckily for the gratification of Leah's curiosity, the moths at the Hall had had some private dinner-parties on the cloth of the curtain, and one of the empty spaces cleared by them allowed Leah to see all that passed without being visible to the spectators. Not that any cared to turn their eyes to the music-gallery, occupied as they were by the dazzling scene around them—unless when some beau of the assembly shouted his orders to the musicians. At first she could distinguish nothing in the blaze of the chandeliers, the glitter of satins, the flutter of gauze, and the quickly-shifting sparkle of gems. The movement of the company, too, seemed to make her head reel; they were all walking about, the couples not having as yet formed for the minuet. Every one looked shorter from Leah's elevation with reference to them; and Lady Barbara, whom she

first discovered by the quick instinct of jealousy, did not seem half so attractive in form or so resplendent in attire as she had done when standing a single female figure in her own bed-chamber.

She did not at first recognise Sir Edgar, for his dress was different from his usual suit, and far more costly. He was not talking to Lady Barbara, certainly, and Leah took such small comfort as she could from that circumstance. Yet she could not but remember that, though he had expressed the greatest desire that she should have an opportunity of seeing him at the assembly, he had not taken any trouble to insure that result, and had seemingly forgotten her existence altogether. "Yes, he must have forgotten me altogether," she repeated to herself, as she wept bitter tears at the recollection of the love-scene which she had overheard.

There was a pause now, and a space was cleared for the dancers by the master of the ceremonies. Those who wished to exhibit their grace and science in the minuet had selected partners, and now led them to their places—a nervous moment for those not hardened by the experience of several seasons. Probably the great-grandmothers of the present beauties who act in private theatricals would have blushed for their descendants could they have known what they would do in the year 1868; yet the staid charmers of 1800 stood up in crowded assemblies to exhibit their persons where external accomplish-

ments were the only attraction. In the lady who acts well, personal charms are secondary to intellectual power. A beautiful young woman enunciating good English sweetly may be a pleasing object of observation, but a plain, clever woman, though past her first youth, will attract a far larger audience, and excite far greater enthusiasm.

Leah saw Miss Elliot led to the top of the room by a gentleman in full uniform, so tall, so finely formed, and so perfectly handsome, that Leah wondered as she gazed with speechless admiration. Miss Elliot was looking very lovely in a white satin dress covered with white lace; her hair, as usual, flowing over her neck in ringlets. She looked up in her partner's face with some slight feeling of awe, for his every gesture showed that he had been perfectly taught dancing by some foreign dancing-master, so graceful and assured were his movements.

Leah seized the opportunity given her by the breaking of a harp-string, and the lull caused by the necessity of replacing it, to whisper to Senhor Monçada—

"Who is that gentleman going to dance with Miss Elliot?"

"He with the stars? All grand here?" pointing to his breast. "Ah! the great general."

"How beautiful!" said Leah with enthusiasm.

"Ah! you vimen always think of that," said the foreigner, who looked with some degree of envy on the fair-complexioned warrior.

"I meant the stars," said Leah—which was not entirely true, for the girl thought the whole effect very fine, and rejoiced that Miss Elliot should have so suitable a partner.

"I hope," said that young lady timidly to the gentleman, "that I shall not do anything very disgraceful to shame you, Sir John. This is the first time I have ever danced the minuet, except with my dancing-master, and I am so nervous;" and Rose became pale for the moment, in her anxiety not to make any false steps.

"I do not fear for my fair partner's success," said Sir John gallantly. "The minuet," he continued, "is a dance to teach prudence; the performers know that the eyes of the company are on them. They are quick to criticise deficiencies in the amount of respect the dancers should show to the assembly in the proper depression of their bows and courtesies; quick to estimate the tremor of indecision in their actions, and to watch with spiteful satisfaction the slightest approach to a false step. Remember to be confident; confidence is like charity, and covers a multitude of sins."

"'Tis very well to tell me to be confident," said Rose. "Confidence is a fine quality, doubtless, but it requires a tolerably broad basis of merit to expand

itself on. Have you always been confident of success, Sir John?"

"Of ultimate success, I think. Thus I feel convinced that we shall get through this present business successfully, and that all the world will think there was never a more charming dancer than Miss Elliot, or a happier man than him whom she has honoured with her hand on this occasion."

The first bars of the Minuet de la Cour were played, and the different couples arranged themselves to be ready for the repetition of the first eight bars, which gave the signal for the commencement of the dance. The company were partitioned off by a gilded rope, which gave the dancers space for the performance of the figure without their being pressed upon. When Miss Elliot, after the sliding step to the right, had to sink in her courtesy, there was a little unsteadiness as she rose on the tips of her toes; but she recovered herself, and when half turned away from the spectators, with her foot pointed to the right, her graceful head inclined over her shoulder towards her partner, her dress hanging in light folds from her hands as she held it up, she made a charming object to the spectator and to Sir John—who, accustomed to the society of ladies of different lands and various styles of beauty, thought, notwithstanding, that he had never seen a fairer creature, though he had met many more accomplished in the arts of polite society. This expression

appeared in his eyes, when, in the course of the minuet having arrived opposite each other, the gentleman bowed to his partner, and the lady courtesied in return. Rose saw it, and was satisfied that so far she had not done anything very bad.

In the meantime, Sir Edgar and Lady Barbara were making similar claims on the admiration of the company. Here both were assured of doing well from long practice, and neither was troubled by any misgivings about false steps. "If I make one or two," said Lady Bab to herself, "it won't be the first time that my petticoats have concealed similar lapses." On a first look the spectators murmured, "Is that Lady Barbara? How very plain she is! Plain! why, she is right-down ugly!" Yet, after looking with the fascination of dislike for ten minutes, they exclaimed, "'Tis a wonderful countenance!—so attractive!" One gentleman repeated:—

> "'Tis not her face that love creates,
> For there no graces revel;
> 'Tis not her shape, for there the fates
> Have rather been uncivil;
> Her voice, her touch, might give the alarm,
> 'Twas both, perchance, or neither:
> In short, 'twas the provoking charm
> Of Cælia altogether."

Exceedingly vain and egotistical, and only not spiteful to others because she was so satisfied of the power of her own charms, it might appear strange

that Lady Barbara should be so popular as she was with her own sex. But women forgive everything in a decidedly ugly woman. It is such a relief to feminine feelings to see one who can excite only agreeable comparisons with regard to themselves.

The closing acknowledgments made by the dancers to the company elicited murmurs of applause; and then they repaid themselves for the constraint of the stately minuet by the lively gavotte. After this was concluded, the company generally formed themselves into lines for the enjoyment of country dances. All seemed a fairy scene of wonder to Leah, as she listened to the resonant harmony, and watched the light movements of the dancers in what seemed to her untaught eyes an inextricable confusion, from which were evolved order and beauty. She watched Sir Edgar and Lady Barbara standing at the head of the dance, opposite to each other. It seemed to her sad eyes that their movements were typical of the events of their life. They seemed, in coquetting or simulation, to give their hands to others. They danced with the partners of others, then in a moment they together pursued their headlong course down the room between the two lines, one of gentlemen and the other of ladies. They seem to repent, to return—all is confusion, again falling back into order; again and again this is repeated. Miss Elliot and Sir John go through the same movements. At length Lady Barbara, who

never danced so much as to destroy the delicate tinting on her cheeks, without regarding the desires of those yet undanced with to take their share in the amusement, placed her hand in that of her partner, and desired to be conducted to a cooler apartment.

Leah saw them leave the room, and, wretched as she had been in witnessing the seeming devotion of Sir Edgar's manner to her rival, she was far more miserable when they had passed altogether from her observation.

She thought she would try to get away from her position in the music-gallery, and go home. Why stay here to be made wretched by the sight of amusement in which she had no share, and to be reminded of happiness which she could never again enjoy? Then she told herself that her father would be very angry should she return alone across the park on such an evening; but, in the depths of her heart, she knew that the real reason was her lingering hope to be able to say a word or two of reproach to her inconstant lover.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"'Tis most certain
In their flirting
Women oft have envy shown;
Pleased to ruin
Others' wooing,
Never happy in their own."

GAY.

IN the meantime, Lady Barbara was discontented. She had Sir Edgar; but what was that? She had had Sir Edgar's devotion for the past two years; and there was that chitty-faced thing Rose dancing with General Sir John Moore, who had just returned from the West Indies, surrounded by the halo of his gallantry and intellect; and, worst of all, he seemed to have no eyes for any woman but his partner, and had not once glanced at her. "If I can but once engage him to speak to me," she had said, "I shall enthral him;" and in passing him, as he was leading Rose to the top of the room, she dropped her handkerchief so near him that he must have trodden on it, had he not picked it up and presented it to her. He did this with a sweeping bow, and without giving her a second look.

Lady Barbara flushed with anger, especially when Sir Edgar, who had seen the manœuvre, guessed the motive that had prompted it, and made some light jest as to the Eastern interpretation of such an act. It hurt Lady Bab's conscience to be found out.

As Sir Edgar saw that his value had gone down in the barometer of Lady Barbara's favour, he became more anxious to raise himself therein. Eager in whatever trifle occupied him at the moment, and mortified at the indifference with which Lady Bab received his homage—indifference which inspired the yawn, scarcely concealed by politeness—he lost the presence of mind which would have urged his withdrawal from her side, and only abased himself still more in the hope of winning some return to his gallantries of speech and manner. So earnestly, indeed, did he urge his renewed addresses—an earnestness born of vanity, and the hope of evincing to the company that he had won the prize for whom many in that assembly had competed—that had Lady Barbara accepted him on the spot, he could not, as a man of honour, have withdrawn from his engagement.

Was Leah forgotten in this strife of contemptible motives? As completely as if he had met her in a dream, and been happy in her presence, as with a

fair creature in fairy-land, but, in returning to the routine of every-day life, all circumstances connected with her had faded from his mind.

But, while his pleading lip trembled with earnestness in his supplication for her favour, Lady Bab, perceiving that the dancing had ceased for the present, and that Rose was walking about on the arm of her distinguished partner, was seized with a sudden paroxysm of friendship for the lady in whose house he was residing for the present on a visit, and watching an opportunity as she passed her, released herself from Sir Edgar's arm, and taking that of Mrs. Mowbray, whispered to him—"Go to my room and ask my maid for a pocket-handkerchief."

Sir Edgar felt irritated and mortified, fully anticipating what occurred a few minutes later, when he saw Mrs. Mowbray, in passing Sir John, stop and speak a few words, and when the courtesy of the lady and the bow of the gentleman showed that the desired introduction had taken place. He saw why he had been despatched to fetch Lady Barbara's handkerchief, and did not hurry himself to obey, preferring to see how the lady's stratagem had answered. This could not be determined then, for the musicians had left their seats for refreshments, and Sir Edgar went sulkily towards Lady Bab's bedroom, expecting to find there Bell, to

whom he understood Lady Barbara had intended him to apply for it.

Before he got half-way, the thought that the band were taking refreshments made him thirsty, and he went down to the sideboard in the dining-room and drank several glasses of iced champagne. The exhilaration produced by the subtle spirit gave him a don't-care kind of feeling. He had not really loved Lady Bab, and, under the influence of the champagne, he defied her mentally to mortify him again. He had a shrewd suspicion, also, that her somewhat artificial grace would not produce so much effect on a man of thirty-seven, who had in boyhood been educated in the refinements of Marie Antoinette's court, and had been the companion of dukes and princes, and admitted to the toilettes of duchesses and princesses, as the wild-rose bloom and unsophisticated beauty of Miss Elliot. There was a charming simplicity, also, in the manner of the young hostess, arising from the frankness of her nature and the consciousness that she had nothing to conceal, and never pretended to be more, or to know more, than she was certain she was entitled to be and to know; and such an honest look in her transparent eyes, that Sir Edgar, seeing the unquestionable homage paid to her by a man whose judgment was unimpeachable, felt that he might have had the pearl of great price, and if he

had not tossed it away, had neglected to take it from its shell, and was disgusted by his own want of perception. The music recommenced, and he stole back to the room to see how Lady Barbara was occupied, and whether she had secured the partner she had coveted. Miss Elliot, still leaning on the arm of Sir John Moore, and listening intently to his voice, forgot in the entrancing interest of the subjects of his conversation that she was surrounded by well-dressed crowds voluble in eager amusement, and stood in thought by his side, where, in the thick covert of West-Indian plantations, in the silent moonlight, listening to the hissing sounds made by the cane-leaves as the night wind swept by them, he had waited with a few indomitable spirits in ambush to intercept the skulking Indians who, aided by French marauders, waited to carry murder and rapine into the homes of their late masters.

"I don't know whether she is dancing or not. I only do know that she has not secured the partner she coveted. I am sure 'tis a matter of indifference to me with whom she dances. I'll take another glass of champagne."

In the meantime, when the musicians had left the gallery to go to their supper, Leah felt lonely and deserted by the absence of the only person in the house who had shown her any consideration, and rose, to avoid being seen by any of the servants, who

might consider that she had no business there. She would return to the turret-room, next to that of Lady Barbara. She supposed that was the right place for her till this weary night was over. In the morning she would seek her father's cottage.

On finding her way back to the empty rooms, she discovered that one of the wax-lights had guttered down, carrying with it a bit of lighted wick burnt to a snuff, which was sailing down the miniature torrent of wax, to the great danger of the toilette cover. She was conscience-stricken at this, thinking that, in her ignorance of the duties of a lady's-maid, she had omitted to extinguish the candles when Lady Barbara had left the room. She would try to make up for the extravagance and carelessness by sitting in the dark for the rest of the night, till her mistress returned to her bed-chamber.

Leah extinguished the candles. The night was unusually sultry, and she opened the window and leaned out of it. The sky was partially lit by the moon, over which some dark masses of vapour rolled slowly, concealing sometimes, and sometimes revealing her cold rays. In contrast with that pale illumination was the splendour of orange, and scarlet, and purple reflections, thrown by the coloured glass of the windows, which were made transparent by lighted candles placed inside them. The rays touched with capricious tinting the turf, which

gleamed into a golden splendour, or turned to cold blue and green globes the drooping heads of the cabbage-roses in the beds. Further off, the same unnatural illumination fell on the herds of deer, which had come up near the house to crop the short, sweet grass when silence had sunk over the deserted park.

Deep silence outside the old Hall; inside, the sounds of inspiriting music came louder or softer, at intervals mixed with the tones of merry laughter, and the undistinguishable mixture of noises which indicate the presence of a large multitude intent on enjoyment.

The stillness of the night was pleasanter to Leah than the sounds of mirth, with which her spirits were not in accord. So she leaned out further from the window, till she drew back with a shudder at the contemplation of its great height from the ground. She was too sad to care much whether she lived or died, she thought, yet nature revolted from the idea of her being dashed to pieces on the gravel below—picked up half dead, perchance, to be a spectacle of horror to beholders; so she withdrew herself to a safer position, still gazing out on the dark masses of trees, of which the outline seemed continuous, seen against the sky, and giving no variety of form below the edge of their thick darkness.

Suddenly the whole clusters of forest trees were

revealed in their entire form by a vivid flash of lightning. Leah held her breath with awe, awaiting the burst of thunder which was to follow, but the swift-winged arrows of light had long preceded the slower indication of mischief, and the girl waited for some time with a beating heart for those distant mutterings of doom. To Leah, accustomed to a puritanical view of the Holy Scriptures, these indications seemed the interpretation of God's wrath against the reckless revelry going on in the house. Were they all sinful in their mirth? She knew not. It was difficult to judge harshly of the fair young hostess and that tall, noble-looking man at her side; and Sir Edgar, the cruel man—the deceiver—ah! towards him her heart yearned with intense tenderness, though it was half broken by his falsehood and double dealing.

There was another flash, and then Leah, pale with agitation, listened for the distant roar of heaven's artillery.

"The powers of heaven shall be shaken," said she, as the vibrating thunder gave a still distant but prolonged peal. "Fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven."

In the exaltation of her spirit, the devout habit of her mind returned to her. She took for the time a sublime view of human life, its trials, its temptations, and its ultimate reward or punishment in another state.

In her present state of feeling, whether, in the short space which must intervene before the end of all time, Sir Edgar was united to Lady Barbara or not, seemed unimportant as compared with the question of his ultimate salvation. The sound of the distant music re-echoing through the old Hall appeared to her to breathe a triumphant tone, which inspired a feeling of profound melancholy. Let seventy years pass over those young heads, and where would they be? Where the light step of youth, now chasing the hours of night with flying feet? Where the proud glance of beautiful eyes, and the homage of willing hearts?

Her eyes filled with tears thinking of the strange forms that would fill the Hall, and of the desolation that would have stolen over its courts. Occupied by these reflections, she did not hear a step behind her, till a voice, exclaiming as to the darkness of the room, aroused her from her reverie. She turned, for at that sound her heart seemed to stand still. She had placed herself by that change of position with her back to the window, so she could scarcely have been recognised, unless by any one who knew that she was in the room. Weak, loving woman that she was, at the tones of his voice her devotion to Sir Edgar returned; her loftier thoughts fled. She longed to fling herself into his arms, with tears and reproaches, and to be gathered to his breast, forgiving and forgiven. For women are always to

be *forgiven* if they venture to tell their oppressors the truth. But the first words which were intelligible to Leah chilled her heart, and chained her tongue. He had forgotten all about Leah, and about Lady Barbara's quarrel with Bell, and expecting only to find the lady's-maid, he said—

"Give me a handkerchief for your mistress."

Leah did not move from her position, and that inert form, which excluded what little light there would have been shining through the window, filled Sir Edgar, confused as his mind was by the champagne he had imbibed, with a mysterious dread. He left the room, and returned with one of the candles which lighted the ante-room, and walking up to Leah, threw its light on her statue-like face and humid eyes. It seemed as if he were suddenly brought face to face with a dead love. He had courted Leah when she was an impersonation of delicate bloom and beauty. The bloom was gone, and the beauty, instead of being as changing in expression as the sunset clouds blown by the wind are transient in hue and form, was fixed, as by the touch of death.

"Leah!" he said, with an awe-stricken tone. "Leah!" She did not answer; but the immobility was gone: the lip quivered, the dilated eyes filled with tears, and the colour returned to her cheeks. "Oh, Leah! what a blessing it is to me to see

you again!" and he would have encircled her with his arm, but she disengaged herself, and extended her hand to keep him off. "Why is this, my darling?" he exclaimed. "Do you not know that I adore you—that there is nothing so dear to me on earth as yourself?"

"Stop, Sir Edgar!" Leah said, in a voice so hoarse with emotion as to be hardly recognisable. "Make no more protestations, for God abhorreth a liar."

"Can you doubt my love, sweet Leah?" said the youth, in whose hot arteries the champagne had sent the hurried blood from the heart in quicker pulsations.

"Stand off, Sir Edgar! You do *not* love me!"

"Will you hear me swear, my beautiful Leah? I love you—you only. I have never felt for any woman the passion that burns in my breast for you. I have never cared for any woman's affection as I have valued that with which you have crowned my life with joy. Be mine—mine, for ever!" he murmured, clasping her madly to his breast.

"Let me speak for one instant," said Leah, who had become calm in the depth of her despair, and disengaged herself at once and decidedly. "Sir Edgar! you expressed a wish that I should be here to see you dance. Did you ever think whether I had carried out that desire of yours? I believe you

never thought of the caprice again. I was in that room whilst you had an interview with Lady Barbara, and I was desired by her to satisfy myself of the extent of your devotion to her."

"The devil you did! It was very dishonourable of you to listen."

"Do *you* talk of honour, poor gentleman?"

"Poor!"

"Yes; *poor*—poorer than the penniless girl whose peace of mind you have trifled with for your reckless amusement. You have rank, and wealth, and personal beauty; and folks say you are clever, in addition to these advantages. I have none of these endowments, excepting the fairness which has been your unconscious attraction, giving rise to a caprice (for it is not worthy to be dignified by the name of affection) which will cloud the rest of my life, whilst the remembrance will awaken laughter in your breast, that the village girl should have been so easily gulled. But I would not change places with you, Sir Edgar, for my conscience is unsullied by falsehood and deceit. Go, sir! I never desire to see you again. I refuse all future communication with you."

Sir Edgar sat down and covered his face with his hands. "She hits hard," he thought, "and she is right. She is as far above me in purity of heart and conduct as she is inferior to me in station and wealth;

and—heaven and earth! how beautiful she is! How truly dignified! How superior to that sinuous, snake-like creature to whom I have been talking nonsense the whole of the evening! Leah!" he said, starting up, "will you forgive me? Will you not speak one word of pardon? Leah!"

But she had passed silently from the room whilst his eyes had been covered by his hands, and going into the turret-room, had fastened the door, and refused to answer any petitions uttered through it.

Sir Edgar had returned to the ball-room after taking his refreshments, and was arrested in his onward progress through the room by a sharp tap on his arm by a lady's fan, and, looking round, he perceived Lady Barbara leaning on the arm of one of the officers from the barracks at Stoneham. He was not worth powder and shot, the lady thought, and she desired to have as many as she could as attendants on her. "Where is my handkerchief?" she said; and Sir Edgar, bowing, said he would seek her maid, for the purpose of obtaining it. It was this renewed demand that had sent him to the lady's chamber, and had resulted in his interview with Leah. Finding that his village love would not answer any of his entreaties, he returned to the ball-room, and told Lady Barbara that the room was dark, and that there was no one in it. Miss Elliot, coming up at that moment, and hearing the conver-

sation, begged Sir Edgar to look for one of the servants, and desire him to tell her maid to get one of her own for her ladyship. Rose had forgotten, in the enchantment of her partner's conversation, that she had promised Mr. Preston to make his daughter her care. Now the reference to Lady Bab's room reminded her of her neglect, and proceeding to the supper-room, she selected some grapes and peaches for Leah, and took them up herself. Leah heard the sweet voice, and opened the door.

"Poor girl! I was very naughty not to think of you before. I fear you have felt quite lonely here, whilst we have been so happy. Will you come down, and I will place you where you may see the dancing? No? You prefer being quiet? Then you shall not be disturbed."

Sir John Moore had observed the offering purloined from the supper-table by Miss Elliot, and watched her agile figure with regret when she left the room. As she returned, he accosted her, and hoped that the delicacies had not been carried to any sick friend.

"I saw you robbing the table," he said, smiling.

"You saw me this time, but I had previously defrauded my guests of a nice spring chicken and a plate of sandwiches."

"So after providing your friend with a dinner, you gave him or her a dessert."

"They were different persons—brother and sister," replied Rose; and she told Sir John of Perth Preston's disgrace.

"You don't mean to say that a boy was turned out by his father for his devotion to the dead languages? I shall make a note of it in my journal, as the most incomprehensible conduct, both of father and son, ever known."

Parties kept earlier hours seventy years since, yet the day was breaking when the company left the Holmes. Mr. Elliot looked out with satisfaction at the last carriage that rolled away, and was thankful the *fête* was over. Miss Bruce had followed him about the house like a shadow, and had shown such a wish that he should neither be too hot, nor too cold, nor sit in a draught, nor over-fatigue himself, that Mr. Elliot knew not whether to be most worried or flattered. The worry was only in the present, but the agreeable sensation of having been flattered remained in his elderly head even when he laid it on his pillow, and remained in his sleeping memory as something indistinctly agreeable.

Sir John Moore lingered as he bade Rose adieu, and thanked her for one of the pleasantest evenings he had ever spent.

"It grieves me," he continued, "that I leave Mrs. Mowbray's hospitable mansion to-morrow morning, or rather to-day, for I see the streaks of light in the

eastern horizon. Thus I shall be unable to call and satisfy myself that your exertions for the entertainment of your guests have not entailed any serious fatigue on yourself or your father. Your ancestral home, Miss Elliot, is enough to charm a soldier of fortune away from his allegiance to the deity he has hitherto worshipped—Ambition. Like a weary traveller, who has a high mountain yet to ascend, and longs to linger beside a clear spring, instead of encountering the heat and toil of the ascent, it would seem very delightful to remain in a home like this always."

"I fear you might find the cold spring rather insipid if you drank of it too often," said Lady Barbara, who had come to Miss Elliot's side, determined to share in the adieux, though she had not enjoyed much of Sir John's attention during the evening.

"I doubt it," retorted the gentleman, gazing with unreserved admiration on the unsophisticated beauty which had stood the wear and tear of twenty hours' fatigue without deterioration. "You see, Lady Barbara, a pure, fresh stream is so refreshing—so rare—and one may drink for ever, without the intoxication which produces disagreeable effects." Thus saying, he made a profound bow to the ladies, whilst the slightest possible curl in his lip gave sign that he spoke with intention, and left the house.

"She is a sweet girl—as honest and candid as she looks, I am sure. But a successful soldier should have no wife; and as I am a soldier, I will be a successful one, or die." And Sir John Moore determined to think no more of the pleasant evening he had spent at the Holmes.

END OF VOL. I.

VIRTUE AND CO., PRINTERS, CITY ROAD, LONDON.

VIRTUE & Co CITY ROAD

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 056515320